

The **SHOCK** *of the*
* ANCIENT *



Literature & History in Early Modern France

LARRY F. NORMAN

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

THE SHOCK OF THE ANCIENT

The Shock of the Ancient

Literature & History in Early Modern France

LARRY F. NORMAN

The University of Chicago Press CHICAGO & LONDON

LARRY F. NORMAN is associate professor of Romance languages and literatures, theater and performance studies, and in the College at the University of Chicago. He is the editor or coeditor of several books, most recently *Révolutions homériques*, and the author of *The Public Mirror: Molière and the Social Commerce of Depiction*, the latter published by the University of Chicago Press.

The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637

The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London

© 2011 by The University of Chicago

All rights reserved. Published 2011

Printed in the United States of America

20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 1 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-59148-3 (cloth)

ISBN-10: 0-226-59148-4 (cloth)

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Norman, Larry F.

The shock of the ancient : literature and history in early modern France /
Larry F. Norman.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-59148-3 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-226-59148-4 (cloth : alk. paper) 1. Ancients and moderns,

Quarrel of. 2. France—Intellectual life—17th century. 3. Aesthetics in literature. 4. Criticism—France. I. Title.

PQ251.N67 2011

840.9'004—dc22

2010032031

Ⓢ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1992.

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction: Experiencing Antiquity 1

PART 1 * Historical Sensibility

1 Whose Ancients & Moderns? 11

2 Asserting Modernity 35

3 Splintered Paths of Progress 51

4 Antiquity without Authority 63

PART 2 * The Shock

5 Why the Scandal? 77

6 Modernity & Monarchy 89

7 The Pagan Menace 99

8 Morality & Sociability 113

9 The Ancients Respond 131

PART 3 * Aesthetics: The Geometric & the Sublime

10 Philosophy's Turn 153

11 The Ineffable Effect 185

Conclusion: After the Quarrel 213

Notes 227

Bibliography 261

Index 279

Acknowledgments

This book was conceived at the University of Chicago and nourished by discussion and debate with colleagues and students there. A fellowship at the University's Franke Institute of the Humanities was crucial to its early development. Its horizons were expanded by a series of conferences and colloquia organized around its themes both on campus and at the University of Chicago's Paris Center. Among the many interlocutors at Chicago whose intellectual generosity helped shape this work are Thomas Pavel, Philippe Desan, Robert Morrissey, Françoise Meltzer, David Wray, Glenn Most, Janel Mueller, David Bevington, Jim Chandler, Richard Strier, Tamara Griggs, Jon Sachs, and Katharine Hamerton.

An invitation from the Sessions de Linguistique et de Littérature Anciennes, organized by CLELIA and founded by Jean Lallot and Jean Perrot, provided an extraordinary opportunity for intensive reflection and exchange. Equally important was a visiting professorship, in the framework of a collaborative seminar with Michel Murat and Marielle Macé, at the École Normale Supérieure.

I owe a very special debt to Sophie Rabau, whose insights over the years have been essential in this work's genesis, as well as to Valérie Bénéjam and Dan Edelstein for their invaluable readings of the manuscript. Alan Thomas has been the most encouraging and thoughtful of editors. Too many others have lent their ideas to this book to name here, but among the most important and stimulating I must thank Pierre Force, Antoine Compagnon, Patrick Dandrey, Delphine Denis, Françoise Lavocat, Jean-Pierre van Elslande, Marc Escola, Jean-Louis Jeannelle, Anne-Marie Chanet, Joe Harris, Nicholas Hammond, Emmanuel Bury, Laurence Giavarini,

Marie Blaise, Roger Chartier, Abby Zanger, Downing Thomas, Malina Stefanovska, and Bruce Redford.

My eternal and loving gratitude to Arturo for his unending support and patience.

This book is dedicated to the memory of my father.

INTRODUCTION * Experiencing Antiquity

As for me, I think in a completely different manner, and I find those ancient times all the more beautiful in that they so little resemble our own.

Pour moi je pense tout autrement, et je trouve ces temps anciens d'autant plus beaux, qu'ils ressemblent moins au nôtre.

This short phrase was written in 1711 by the great translator of Homer, Anne Dacier, in defense of the perceived barbarity and ignorance of the Homeric world, so far removed from the refined elegance and idealized rationalism of Louis XIV's France.¹ Dacier certainly needed to defend her beloved *Iliad*. Antiquity had been under attack for the better part of a century. In the early decades of the previous century, Francis Bacon and René Descartes had ruthlessly dismissed, in the name of unfettered reason, all appeals to the superannuated authority of the ancients. In the second half of that century, their heirs, grouped under the banner of the "Modern" party, had repeatedly denounced all the shocking scandals of Greece and Rome: the absurdity of their pagan superstitions and mythological thinking; the selfish brutality and sexual immorality of their heroes, lovers, and leaders; and the primitive irrationality and unpolished crudeness of their philosophy, literature, and arts. In bringing a faithful translation of Homer to the contemporary reading public, Dacier had, in short, much to explain.

Yet what is striking in Dacier's response is precisely her refusal to explain, or at least to explain away, these various scandals. She resists justifying Homer on contemporary, or even on timelessly universal, terms. She

emphasizes instead the peculiar features of his particular historical moment, one whose values and beliefs “so little resemble our own.” In doing so, Dacier boldly chooses not to tread many well-trodden roads. For example, she might have clung to Homer’s declining literary authority, doomed perhaps to fade before a rising modern, national literature, but still a card to be played in his favor. She might have attempted to explain how his gods and heroes actually conformed to the spirit, if not the letter, of contemporary French and Christian standards. She might have insisted that his poetry furnished a still-standing foundation for all present and future literary works. All these arguments had, after all, been tried—sometimes even by Dacier herself. However, at crucial junctures, such as the one quoted, she pursues the opposite path. Rather than attempt to connect Homer to her audience, Dacier chooses to *disconnect* him. She embraces Homer for his fundamental difference, his incommensurability with the modern world. In short, she celebrates antiquity not as a supporting pillar for the current order but instead as a potent challenge to it. Her defense of antiquity ultimately proves thus to be anything but a conservative position; the pagan world she adores is too remote from the contemporary one, or even from the recent past, to be considered the foundation for a sustainable tradition or viable authority. She sees the ancient past less as forebear than as foreign.

Furthermore, her taste for the profound otherness of antiquity is intensely passionate. Dacier demonstrates little of the detachment characterizing an objective analysis of the past. She instead plunges into a profoundly intimate, first-person discovery of cultural difference: “As for *me*, *I think* in a completely different manner, and *I find* those ancient times all the more beautiful . . .” The beauty in question is heightened by its strangeness, and her love of it jealously inflamed by what she claims is the intolerant opposition of its critics. Hers is an aesthetic experience, an appreciation of “beauty,” yes; but it is, more specifically, an aesthetic experience intensified both by a keen awareness of the exoticism of the past and by an intoxicating sense of liberation from the present and the conformity it requires.

Dacier’s personal commitment leads her, though, to overstate the lone bravery of her battle cry. She may think “in a completely different manner” from the detractors of Homer, but her position is hardly as singular as she claims. It is in fact indicative of a much broader movement. Her championing of a personal literary experience defined by a historical sensibility is deeply indebted to her forerunners in the previous decades. Like Dacier, these earlier defenders of the ancients often had nothing but their personal experience as readers left to cling to. Modern criticism appeared to have

demolished all other ramparts. If indeed one accepted the new critical rationalism of the age, then objective analysis seemed to incontestably demonstrate the crude imperfections of ancient works, their sloppy repetitions, childish inconsistencies, and general formal disorder. Who could discern a truly methodical and meticulous unity of action in the sprawling *Iliad*? Modern high-mindedness equally appeared to expose the moral failings and sheer brutality of ancient heroes, whether the bloodthirsty Achilles or the mendacious Odysseus. What could one do in the face of such damning evidence? Turn it to the advantage of the ancients. Where the admirers of modern reason and refinement found subject for disturbing shock, those who loved the ancients found reason for entralling awe.

That sensation of awe arose from what they as readers claimed to be their unmediated response to individual ancient works and their ineffable force. It is true, the enthusiasts of antiquity admitted, that one could argue that ancient works sometimes violated the rules of poetic form and of moral propriety. Indeed, they had at times to concede their defenselessness against such arguments grounded on rational criteria. But such methodic reasoning, they contended, was useless against the visceral reaction that poetry—and, in particular, ancient poetry—provokes. In 1687, the translator and adaptor of Greek classics, Longepierre, states the case thus:

If something moves my heart, it cannot be denied that my heart is in fact moved by this thing. [...] A scene from Sophocles terrifies me or makes me weep. Is it possible to say that this cannot be so when *my experience convinces me* of the contrary? Is it possible to assert that I do not feel what I feel? That I weep by bias and tremble by prejudice [in favor of ancients]? [...] When one is touched by *reading the ancients*, the thing is *very real*.

Si quelque chose trouble mon cœur, il faut bien qu'il soit véritablement troublé par cette chose. [...] Une scène de Sophocle m'épouvante ou m'arrache des larmes; dirai-je que cela ne peut pas être quand *mon expérience me convainc* du contraire? Soutiendrai-je que je ne sens pas ce que je sens? Que je pleure par préjugé et que je tremble par prévention? [...] lorsqu'on se sent touché *en lisant les anciens*, la chose est *très réelle*. (*Discours* 36–38; italics mine)²

Longepierre posits the irreducibility of the literary experience itself. In opposition to the critic's analysis, he privileges the reader's "feeling." In opposition to abstract principles, he esteems the "real" effects of a particular tragedy. By enlisting concrete experience in the battle against encroaching modern rationalism, his defense of Sophocles turns the individual practice of an ancient writer—and the intimate response it evokes in the individual

reader—against the distilled poetics of reason. In short, he turns the gritty reality of ancient “classics” against the ideals of modern “classicism.”

This opposition between theory and practice appears somewhat paradoxical, since ancient poets were allegedly the very source of the poetic rules that they sometimes contradict. Aristotle claimed to base his poetics, after all, on Sophocles and Homer, and neo-Aristotelian critics of the sixteenth and seventeenth century often culled their corollaries to the master’s principles from exemplary works by ancient poets. But these modern critics did so in a highly selective manner, creating an abstract, codified form that bore little resemblance to any actual literary work in existence. Indeed, late seventeenth-century attacks on ancient poetry were deeply indebted to neo-Aristotelian theoreticians such as Julius Caesar Scaliger, whose 1561 commentaries on the *Poetics* assailed Homer for his lack of conformity to the same classical rules that Homer himself was (formerly) thought to have inspired. Furthermore, modern neo-Aristotelian theoreticians claimed to surpass Aristotle himself, who was censured for his servile admiration of imperfect poems such as the *Iliad*. For critics of Homer (and admirers of modernity) such as Charles Perrault, Aristotle betrayed his own philosophical project by yoking critical reason to literary example, by slavishly describing poetic practice instead of boldly prescribing philosophical principles. “This process is hardly worthy of Aristotle, because it is up to the philosopher to lead the poet, not the poet to lead the philosopher” (“Ce procédé n’est guère digne d’Aristote, puisque c’est au philosophe à conduire le poète, et non pas au poète à conduire le philosophe”; *Parallèle* 3:276). According to this approach, only reason, not the vagaries of individual genius, could perfect literature. Thus Perrault’s fellow detractor of the ancients, Fontenelle, praises the profoundly ordered and rational works of “modern poets” who are “more philosophers than poets” (*Œuvres complètes* 5:556–57).³

The defense of the ancients, then, must be seen in the wider context of a broad defense of a certain autonomy for poetry, of its license to break with the reigning cult of reason. The exceptionalism of literature proposed here—its special exemption from current philosophical, theological, and even moral codes—finds its most powerful weapon in the freshly revitalized concept of the sublime. The fierce admirer of antiquity, Boileau, led the way with his 1674 translation of and introduction to Longinus’s *On the Sublime*, bringing a formerly neglected work to the center of literary discussions for the coming decades. Far from the explicit constraints of neo-classical order, Boileau’s sublime is the mysterious force of a *je ne sais quoi* in poetry—a ravishing power which cannot be acquired through rational method or rules perfected through time, but which is instead grounded

in a primordial and heroic grandeur of imagination. And no time is more propitious to this heroic inspiration than the Greek “Heroic Age” itself. Homer thus becomes the greatest poet because the first, the least broken and tamed by the progress to come of rational method. The experience of the sublime is thus joined to the remoteness of antiquity. Where the modern age has dull perfection, the ancients have glittering *firstness*; where the moderns have methodized judgment and exactitude, the ancients have fiery invention and creativity. In the name of the sublime, Boileau could defend the strange and the indefinable, the alien and the inexplicable, or what he more precisely calls the “elegant and majestic obscurity” that marks poetic genius, as opposed to philosophical rigor (*OC* 551).

More importantly, the same nonrational instinct and imagination that characterizes the creative act of the sublime poet also characterizes for Boileau the act of reading—at least the act of reading a sublime text. The reader’s response to such texts escapes all rational analysis, all measurable and quantifiable criteria for judgment. In language that prepares the path for Longepierre and Dacier, Boileau describes the reader’s experience of the sublime:

The sublime is not, properly speaking, a thing which can be proved or demonstrated; [...] it is instead a wonder which seizes, which strikes, which makes itself felt.

Le sublime n’est pas proprement une chose qui se prouve et qui se démontre ; [...] mais c’est un merveilleux qui saisit, qui frappe, et qui se fait sentir. (*OC* 546)

The sublime by nature overwhelms reason, it “carries away, ravishes, transports” (“enlève, ravit, transporte”) the reader; it temporarily vanquishes the critical and analytic faculty (338). Of course, Boileau himself—undeniably something of a Cartesian in his preference for conceptual order and clarity—can only hesitantly embrace his own audacious formulation of the sublime. Nevertheless it constitutes the groundwork upon which later defenders of ancient poetry will build. By privileging the intimate individual reading experience above generalized principles, Boileau’s sublime marks the elaboration of a decidedly empirical approach, even a radically sensualist approach, to literature and the arts that will characterize key critics of the coming century, from l’abbé Du Bos in France and Addison in England forward (and both were keen readers not only of Boileau, but also of Locke). In this sense, the espousal of a nonrational relationship to poetry can be seen not as a nostalgic return to a Renaissance neo-Platonic idealization of poetic inspiration and fury, but instead as a rising reaction

against contemporary rationalism and a forward-looking reevaluation of the senses, emotions, and imagination.

What we might call the Longinian revolt against perceived Cartesian requirements then transforms the defense of remote antiquity into something of an avant-garde. For if the spirit of rational critique conquers so many philosophical and political domains in the Enlightenment, the appreciation for the nonrational gains ground on at least one front, that of the eighteenth-century conceptualization of art and literature. Those who celebrated modernity employed, as we have seen, its philosophy to condemn ancient poetry. The admirers of antiquity, in contrast, employed its poetry to help elaborate a new and developing branch of philosophy, soon to be dubbed “aesthetics” and concerned not with reasoned knowledge, but with the separate category of sensorial understanding—in particular, with the subjective perception of beauty (and, more potently, of the sublime). Champions of the age of Louis XIV such as Perrault hoped that philosophy would revolutionize the arts, creating a new kind of methodically ordered and morally refined poetry, but in the end it was the ancient arts (reread by modern eyes) that revolutionized philosophy, creating a new form of reasoned analysis for the imaginative and ineffable experience of literature.



This book explores how new conceptions of literature and its prerogatives arose from a rereading of the most ancient texts. But first it is necessary to fully appreciate how those ancient texts came to possess such disturbing, even explosive, power. That power depended on a rising historical outlook which radically defamiliarized the ancient world and made it “so little resemble our own.” Part 1 of this work thus examines the period’s increasing sensitivity to the divide between antiquity and modernity. Even more than a sensitivity, a kind of hyperconsciousness arose concerning the fundamental differences defining cultures through time. The resulting intellectual energy expressed itself in a collective conflict that consumed the literary world for the better part of a half-century and that was known as the “quarrel of the ancients and moderns.” All of the poets, critics, and philosophers engaged in this conflict adopted (at least partially) the new paradigms of historical evolution that were then taking shape. This common concern, however, led not to consensus but to contention. While both parties elaborated surprisingly complex periodizations of antiquity (which included new notions of the preclassical and primitive) and thereby exploded idealized visions of a cohesive Greco-roman world, they nevertheless dis-

agreed violently in their evaluations of the distinct periods that emerged from this historicizing scrutiny (see chapter 1). The parties likewise disagreed over the nature of the trajectory that had led contemporary France to see itself as so removed from the ancient past (see chapter 2). Was the crossing of this historical divide the final result of a slow accumulation of knowledge, one that was paradoxically indebted to the ancients themselves and the Renaissance recovery of their works? Or was it the result of a very recent and radical revolution in human reasoning, springing *ex nihilo* from the “new philosophy” of the age? The partisans struggled in turn over the applicability of any idea of historical evolution to the special domain of the arts and literature (as opposed to that of the sciences or philosophy), and crafted in consequence new and contending histories for the rise and fall of literary genres and artistic forms (see chapter 3). Finally, the quarrel not only reshaped views of historical time and its relation to literature; it served, perhaps most importantly, to liberate criticism from the deadening constraints of literary and scholarly tradition, creating ground for unbound inquiry into an “antiquity without authority” (see chapter 4).

In fact, so untethered had the ancient world come to seem from comfortable tradition and respectable authority that it was more likely, as I have suggested, to elicit outrage than approval. The second part of this book thus turns from cool-headed efforts to historicize antiquity to the impassioned responses that this historicized past provoked when related (and opposed) to modernity. The emphasis shifts from ancient Greece to modern Paris and Versailles, or, phrased more accurately, from the concept of historicism to the rhetoric of presentism (see chapter 5). Three specific subjects of scandal, each addressed here in separate sections, drew fire from the critics of antiquity: its perceived political disorder and brutal power structures, so contrary to the stability and orderliness of modern centralized monarchy; the irrationality of its pagan religion, opposed to the ever-progressing “reasonableness” of Christianity; and antiquity’s moral turpitude, in particular the ferocity that characterized relations between the sexes and that proved antithetical to modern sociability and heterosexual “gallantry.” In defense of antiquity, its champions replied by condemning what they called the collective “vanity” and chauvinistic “prejudices” of a modern world unable to tolerate any form of cultural difference (see chapter 9). In so doing, they formulated a pluralistic approach to the question of ancients and moderns that drew on earlier humanist and freethinking relativism while preparing the path for the cosmopolitanism of the eighteenth century.

But as much as the admirers of antiquity embraced a form of temporal pluralism and tolerance, they were ultimately less concerned with the

moral, philosophical, and political dimensions of historical difference than with its purely literary implications. These aesthetic issues are the subject of the last part of this work. In response to the Moderns' rationalist poetics of methodical order and moral propriety (see chapter 10), Ancient partisans claimed poetry's independence from the empire of modern reason and ethics (see chapter 11). Their adoption of an experiential approach to literature would prove to have tremendous consequences for Enlightenment thought, which are explored in the book's conclusion. Partly indebted to the French partisans of antiquity, the early eighteenth-century British taste for the Homeric sublime—notably in Pope and Addison—offer to a perplexed figure like the young Voltaire the means by which to reconcile the nonrational in art with the dictates of critical reason. But the clash between ancient and modern does not quite so easily resolve itself, and a parting glance at later thinkers such as Diderot and Rousseau will reveal some surprising turns in the aftershocks of the battle and the conflicted positions that resulted. As the eighteenth century ends, however, the terrain of the battle will fundamentally shift. A new sense of the “modern,” the Romantic, places itself in opposition to a new and increasingly distant past, this one being the previous age's rationalized classicism. The old ancients and moderns thus lose their potency, replaced by new rivals in the battles of literary time.

Our history proper ends there, but the long story of understanding and reappraising what it meant is just beginning. If the achievement of the quarrel of the ancients and moderns was to sunder the past from the present, not only in order to better know that past, but to better *experience* it, then perhaps the reflections that emerged from the conflict can help us better appreciate the invigorating foreignness of the quarrel's own time, that of the French neoclassical age, as well as of the ancient classical age that it debated. In other words, the sublime that Racine found in Homer's remoteness might help us find the sublime in Racine's. More generally, it might allow us to better gauge the conditions that permit readers, at a given historical moment, to experience what Roland Barthes called the “explosive power of the classics, whose works possess the minutely detailed, unpredictable and dangerous architecture of infernal machines.”⁴ Those words are a reassuring cry against the presumption of time's dulling sway. Nevertheless, the salubriously “infernal” power of the ancient to shock, and of the canonical to break convention, is never—as the following pages will show—as simple a business as we might hope.

PART I * Historical Sensibility

I * Whose Ancients & Moderns?

The Name of the Quarrel

From the mid-seventeenth to the early eighteenth centuries—at the heart of what is called the French neoclassical age—poets, critics, and philosophers radically rethought how history shapes literature. Key to this rethinking was a new, and often disturbing, understanding of the cultures of antiquity that had been considered the foundation for later modern achievements. It is one of history's ironies that the modern period characterized as “classical” (or “neoclassical”) came to adopt a sharply critical distance in regard to the very Greco-Roman past that it apparently so admired. To understand the “shock of the ancient” is to wrestle with this basic paradox: the fracturing of historical time that fundamentally defamiliarizes classical antiquity was the work of an age that also often wished to coexist with that increasingly remote era. And however much that modern classical age might have idealized stable order and timeless harmony, the contentious efforts to apprehend and evaluate the startling otherness of its ancient past constituted nothing less than a historical identity crisis.

The sources of that crisis were plentiful. The perceived advances of rationalist philosophy and modern sciences (from Galileo and Descartes to Newton), the much-vaunted refinement of manners in contemporary courts and salons, the rational reorganization of political power in efficiently centralized national governments, all contributed to the growing sense of a yawning gap between the contemporary world and past ages. More interesting, though, are the consequences of this crisis. Peering into the newly acquired distance that divided them from the ancients, thinkers crafted innovative models to explain the trajectories that, from one epoch to another, transformed literary and artistic genres. This historical sensi-

bility was applied as well to the understanding of the millennial span of Greek and Roman antiquity itself, also perceived as subject to the sweeping alterations of time. Modern authors accordingly took pains to differentiate, for example, later (Roman) ancients from earlier (Greek) ancients. In assessing the diverse and succeeding stages of antiquity, they appeared to elongate its span, and, in consequence, they further distanced the earliest ancients from the most contemporary moderns—Troy from Versailles, to use their own terms.

Such nuanced historical analyses, however, sometimes clashed with much less detached, indeed highly emotional, responses to the increasingly remote works of antiquity. These visceral responses ranged, as I have suggested, from revulsion at ancient brutality to marveling at the same faraway past. Whether they produced troubling shock or equally troubling wonder, however, ancient works were still canonical and, disturbing though they were, could not be simply discarded at the time. They had to be closely grappled with, and this required new conceptions structuring the relation of literature to both morality and reason, to the claims of both modern society and modern philosophy.

The name given to this crisis concerning literature and the arts is the Quarrel of the Ancient and Moderns.¹ Before entering its fray, however, we must confront head-on the misfortune of a name that hardly suggests the kind of far-reaching debate that I have just suggested. A brief examination of this terminological obstacle will prove fruitful. Consider first the term “quarrel.” Although the debate, officially ranging from 1687 to 1716 (though extending its reach at least a few decades earlier and later) engaged the greatest literary thinkers of the time—from Perrault, Fontenelle, Boileau, and Racine in its first generation, through La Bruyère, Fénelon, Anne Dacier, Swift, and Pope in its succeeding generations, to Montesquieu, Vico, Hume, Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau in its wake—the word “quarrel” threatens to reduce the affair to a paltry dispute, to a querulous polemic presumably motivated by the cabal politics of self-positioning writers. But perhaps even more crippling is what follows the word “quarrel.” The pairing of “ancients and moderns” conjures up the kind of reductive rivalry associated with a beauty contest—in this case, one where each of the two contestants, Greco-Roman antiquity and modern Europe, awaits its crowning as something like “best overall epoch” in history. In such a contest it is safe to assume that the true complexities and interdependencies of the epochs placed in competition will be sacrificed to the partisan interests of the rival campaigns.

It must be admitted, moreover, that the title given to the conflict is the creation not of some condescending literary historians of a later century,

but instead of the participants themselves. Indeed, the supposed artificiality of the quarrel threatened its reputation from the very beginning. The Modern party leader Charles Perrault reported that the first reaction to the official inauguration of the long-brewing quarrel—his 1687 reading of *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* to the august French Academy—was characterized less by serious offense than dismissive derision.² Likewise, the first Ancient party riposte to Perrault, Longepierre's *Discours sur les Anciens* of the same year, opened with a plea against the popular assumption that the entire “dispute” was purely “idle” (“inutile”), asserting that the matter was “much more important than it appears” (“bien plus considérable qu'il ne semble”). A certain impression of inconsequentiality reigned for decades to come, through the final episode of the quarrel—known as the *querelle d'Homère* (1711–16)—which Montesquieu characterized as the “most shallow dispute imaginable” (“dispute la plus mince qu'il se puisse imaginer”).³ It is thus little surprise that the quarrel is often remembered as something of an intellectual farce, memorialized less by the production of seminal works of literary criticism than by the cruelly satiric reception it received at the hands of lampoonists, most famously Jonathan Swift, who, with his 1697 mock-epic, gave the quarrel its alternative, and equally derisory, title in English: “The Battle of the Books.”⁴

The past century and a half has seen many attempts to dispel the perceived cloud of conceptual poverty hanging over the quarrel, most often by contextualizing it within a much wider historical landscape—thus saving the quarrel from itself, so to speak. Though the quarrel centered, as we will see, upon literary (and sometimes more largely artistic) matters, historians from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century identified the quarrel as a forward-looking chapter in the large-scale movements of Cartesian rationalism, the scientific revolution, and the emerging ideology of human progress to triumph in the eighteenth century.⁵ Perhaps in reaction, though still looking to a horizon well beyond the quarrel itself, a number of mid-twentieth-century scholars turned their gaze not forward but backward, emphasizing the Renaissance, medieval, and even ancient roots of the quarrel, which now became only a minor episode in a history of *longue durée*; Boileau and Perrault, Alexander Pope and Anne Dacier were arguing over the meager crumbs of an intellectual feast devoured generations, even centuries, earlier.⁶ Finally, in the wake of late twentieth-century cultural conflicts, the quarrel was frequently viewed, with polemical flare, through the contemporary perspective of challenges to the canon and literary tradition, and of the attendant issues of cultural identity and presentism.⁷

The expansive outlook (whether retrospective or prospective) of such

studies has been invaluable in illuminating the intellectual framework of the quarrel. Yet by so broadly generalizing (sometimes to the point of universalizing) the problem of “ancients and moderns,” these studies have also stripped the debate of many of the surprising complexities captured at the time by those same two terms. More damagingly, the repeated parallels with other conflicts opposing past and present tend to reinforce a caricature of the quarrel as a stark combat between, on the one side, the conservative defenders of a collapsing “ancient” tradition and, on the other, a “modern” revolt against the stifling authority of the past. The emphasis given by some historians to this reductive dichotomy seems to constitute a conspiracy to render the quarrel as futile—and as boring—as possible. If indeed it is the story of a rising early Enlightenment modernity toppling the tired pillars of a reactionary order based on Greek and Latin authority, there is not much of a story to tell, for its end is foretold from its beginning, and our interests and sympathies are unlikely to shift in its unfolding. Finally, the comparisons with other putatively binary conflicts only heighten the perception of the quarrel as, well, a “quarrel”: a stand-off between two fixed parties whose positions are as simplified and unbending as they are diametrically opposed to one another.

The following pages tell a different story. Though it is impossible to discard its time-honored name, I have been guided by the simple conviction that the quarrel of the ancients and moderns is neither a quarrel nor about ancients and moderns—at least not “ancients” and “moderns” as we might first identify them. Let me clarify, beginning with “quarrel.” The conflict of ideas runs much deeper than a simple dispute unambiguously opposing clearly identified parties. This is true because partisans on either side were very often attracted to positions associated with their opponents. From contending principles, the two parties sometimes reached common conclusions; from common principles, contending positions. Indeed, and the point is capital, they agreed on what one might erroneously consider the essence of the quarrel: there was in fact little dispute that a vast historical evolution had considerably distanced modernity from antiquity, and, more importantly, there was a consensus that the “authority” granted to the latter was largely superannuated. Both parties, as I have already suggested, viewed the Greco-Roman past as a fundamentally foreign world. When, in 1673, the young heroine of Molière’s last comedy, *Le malade imaginaire*, baldly asserts that “the ancients, sir, are the ancients, and we are the people of today” (“Les anciens, Monsieur, sont les anciens, et nous sommes les gens de maintenant”; act 2, sc. 6), she is hardly uttering a radical paradox or engaging in a daring polemic. She is simply stating the obvious: antiquity is a world away.

What the parties differed on, then, was not the deep fissure between antiquity and modernity, but instead the value to be granted those different times and, perhaps more fundamentally, the criteria for judging such value. The Moderns found scandal in antiquity's strange ways: as Perrault put it, "I have long been *shocked* by this ancient manner" ("Il y a longtemps que je suis choqué de cette manière antique"; *Parallèle* 3:179; italics mine). Ancient apologists, in contrast, embraced a kind of appreciative wonder inspired by the same historical difference. In his 1688 *Discours sur Théophraste*, for example, La Bruyère celebrated the seductions of an exotically remote ancient Athens in these terms: "nothing is more opposed to our manners than all these things, but the distance in time makes us savor them" ("rien n'est plus opposé à nos mœurs que toutes ces choses; mais l'éloignement des temps nous les fait goûter"; 12). Anne Dacier, as we have seen, perhaps best summed up the Ancient position when she declared in 1711, "I find these ancient times all the more beautiful in that they so little resemble our own."

The Moderns may have led the Ancients in gauging the insurmountable distance between antiquity and the present day; but Ancient partisans, perhaps sensing the inevitable, embraced this historical fissure and appropriated it toward ends, we begin to see, that Modern partisans would never have suspected. To illustrate the complex relation between the parties, consider this line from a 1701 letter (to which I will return later) written by the Ancient party leader, Boileau, to his Modern counterpart, Perrault. After conceding the superiority of modern France in a number of domains to ancient Rome, he declares:

You see, Sir, that we do not have a different opinion concerning the esteem that our own nation and our own century merit; but that we are differently of the same opinion.

[...] vous voyez, Monsieur, qu'à proprement parler, nous ne sommes point d'avis différent sur l'estime qu'on doit faire de notre nation et de notre siècle: mais que nous sommes différemment de même avis. (*OC* 573)

"Differently of the same opinion." Boileau's words urge us to view the quarrel as a kind of Pascalian dialectic, a gradation of overlapping principles and conclusions whose paradoxical succession reveals the hidden substratum of worldviews. By adopting a dialectical, rather than purely polemical, reading of the quarrel, I hope to question, or at least nuance, the very notion of "parties." More than a mere *polemical conflict* opposing two parties, the rich interplay of ideas debated in the quarrel generated a more complex *internal conflict* opposing the often contradictory positions

held by each individual partisan. The truly revealing “quarrel” is thus the one fought out inside each thinker’s mind, inside each Fontenelle who hesitates between his acknowledged debt to the past and his denigration of its supposed achievements, and inside each Boileau, who veers from praise of modern rational precision to ecstasy before the ancient sublime.

Of course, the participants in the quarrel were generally attracted more to one pole of the debate than to the other. In deference to their own self-identification and to the historiography of the quarrel, I will refer to them as members of the Ancient or Modern party and explore their sometimes violent opposition. But I will also uncover certain assumptions shared by the two parties—even if, as Boileau would say, they were “differently” shared. The story I will relate here is thus one of unexpectedly intertwining notions of literary history and aesthetics. For that reason, my tale does not closely narrate a chronology of polemical events or the biographies of the authors. (That work has, in any case, been done all too well elsewhere.)⁸ Indeed, to more vividly illuminate the dialogue of ideas, it might be tempting to relay the debate without naming the speakers. If cited anonymously, a good number of pronouncements or opinions could not in fact be easily ascribed to an Ancient or a Modern partisan; in the most interesting cases, it is indeed surprising that *either* would dare so speak. The interests of comprehensibility, however, preclude such experimentation.

Turning now to the second part of the quarrel’s name, that is, to the “ancient and modern” ages in debate, I will likewise employ the terms, as is necessary, while calling them into question. Both parties in the quarrel, far from regarding these two contending ages as unified blocks, demonstrate a keen sense of the mutable and hybrid identities of historical periods. They conceive of a certain kind of modernity existing within antiquity, as well as of a certain antiquity surviving within the modern world. They are aware not only of the distance separating themselves from the ancients, but also of the distance that could separate ancients from ancients and, in surprising consequence, bring some ancients closer to the moderns. This shifting of perspectives is essential for the production of the shock and wonder that antiquity affords. Antiquity must, in its strangeness and remoteness, deviate far enough from contemporary standards to provoke scandal or awe; but it also must, in its proximity, seem close enough—within striking distance, so to speak, of the modern world—to provoke that same scandal or awe (rather than detached curiosity or cool indifference). The same shifting perspective—creating in turn the impression of distance, then nearness—is likewise necessary for the power of ancient works to shape modern aesthetics: they must be at the same time alien enough to provide *alternative* models, and yet relevant enough to provide at least partially *ac-*

cessible models. However, before fully exploring these issues in the second and third parts of this book, we must examine the historical paradigms that generated them.

Historical Self-consciousness

The richness of the historical conceptions at play in the quarrel begins with the participants' keen awareness of their own complex relation to what they called the "ancients." Both parties were anything but naïve when they sought to evaluate the otherness of the Greco-roman world. They understood how difficult it was to judge, from their own vantage point, a historical period of which so little remained after the deluge of passing millennia. But this sensitivity arose not only from a candid admission of the enormous loss of documentation that obscured the past to modern eyes. Beyond such shared historical lucidity, it was also in the interest of advancing their contending positions that the participants in the quarrel exploited the remoteness of antiquity. Such arguments play a central role from the 1687 opening texts of the debate, with, for the Moderns, Charles Perrault in his *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, and, for the Ancients, Longepierre in his *Discours sur les anciens*.

For Perrault, the lacunae in historical knowledge promote the claim that the lovers of antiquity are simply romanticizing a lost world of which little was known. They make a sublime mountain out of each surviving molehill. Indeed, Perrault frequently argues that the very loss through time of linguistic knowledge—for example, the vexing uncertainties over the historically accurate pronunciation of ancient Greek—proves that the defenders of the classics have arbitrarily reconstructed a richly saturated painting from the faint and worn lines of extant texts. Indeed, the more the past becomes unknown and unknowable, he suggests, the more its admirers can falsely aggrandize it. The fog of the past creates an obscurity that only further excites the lover of the ancients:

In what consists adoration but in the recognition of an infinite perfection in what one adores, [...] one finds everything about it admirable, and *even all the more admirable in that one does not understand it*.

En quoi consiste l'adoration sinon à reconnaître une perfection infinie dans ce qu'on adore, [...] on y trouve tout admirable, et même d'autant plus admirable que l'on ne le comprend pas. (*Parallèle* 1:13).

In response, the Ancient apologists, far from conceding or even evading Perrault's argument, happily exploit it for their own ends. They reply: if

we can find so much to admire in a dead language that is partially lost, and even at times unintelligible, imagine what it was like when alive and immediately accessible to the mind and senses! What could better prove the magnificence of the original in its first glory than the miraculous survival of at least some of its splendor in its decimated ruins? So it is that when Longepierre undertakes a passionate defense of the central poet of the quarrel, Homer, he admits freely that today

we only partially understand the greatest of the beauties of the poet. Few understand the language of Homer, and even those rare few cannot feel its beauty as if it were their native and natural language.

nous ne connaissons qu'imparfaitement la principale des beautés de ce poète. Peu de gens entendent bien la langue d'Homère, et ce petit nombre encore n'en sent pas les beautés, comme si elle lui était naturelle. (*Discours* 115–16)

All the more astonishing it proves to be, then, that “in the end the most elusive things [are] able, even after so many years, to still inspire this divine flame which first lit them so long ago” (“les choses enfin les plus insensibles [sont] même capables après tant d’années d’inspirer encore ce feu divin dont elles avaient été échauffées autrefois”; 1:14). Only an almost supernatural force, Longepierre asserts, could make a past so lost to our sight, so difficult to recapture, reignite for the modern reader. I will later turn to the literary implications of these arguments, but for the moment it is crucial to recognize that neither Ancient nor Modern partisans were incognizant—or indeed had it in their partisan interests to be incognizant—of the remoteness of the past, and of the difficulty of conjuring it up for easy judgment.

Along with recognizing the opacity of antiquity, thinkers on both sides also reflected on the delicate irony of their own position in time. They were particularly aware of the elusiveness of impartiality, and for this very simple reason: the judges were also contestants. It was, after all the “moderns,” late seventeenth-century Europeans, who were judging the moderns, that is, the selfsame late seventeenth-century Europeans, in comparison to their ancient predecessors.⁹ To remedy this situation and to secure outside evaluations they had, of course, recourse to past judgments, if not in relation to themselves, at least in relation to antiquity. Ancient partisans thus frequently cited the centuries of past praise for their favorite poets. They argued that their position was based not on the ephemeral tastes of the present moment, but instead on universal and timeless standards, or at least on the standards of the best, brightest, and most impar-

tial critics throughout time. More than a half-century before Hume's essay *Of the Standard of Taste*, they could cite the empirical evidence provided by the constant praise for the geniuses of antiquity, what Longepierre called the "universal consent of all ages" ("consentement universel de tous les siècles"; *Discours* 44–45).

Longepierre, of course, greatly exaggerates. The Modern partisans knew only too well that the consensus in question was far from universal. After all, the writings of antiquity were filled with stinging rebuke for their contemporaries—and for their predecessors. The Moderns were thus at no loss here. They could cite their own favorite ancient critics against the ancients themselves. Chief among these harsh critics was the Plato of the *Republic*, whose forceful denunciation of Homer became a standard Modern party reference. Modern partisans naturally delighted in pitting ancients against ancients. It certainly placed their opponents in a double bind: Ancient apologists were forced to admit that one of their beloved ancients—either the critic or the one criticized, either Plato or Homer—was in the wrong. As Perrault noted, relishing Cicero's occasional harsh word for earlier Greeks, "if Cicero was right, the Moderns have won this battle [...], if Cicero is wrong, what a scandal [for Ancient partisans]!" ("si Cicéron a raison, voilà les Modernes qui ont gagné leur cause, [...] si Cicéron a tort, quel scandale!").¹⁰

Even more interesting was the effort of both parties to seek some disinterested and exterior evaluation, not of the ancients, but of themselves as moderns. Such unbiased referees were of course chronologically impossible to find in the past, and morally implausible in the present age's partisan environment; they therefore had nowhere to look but forward in time. And so they did. Here their awareness of the relativity of the terms led them to imagine how future generations (the "moderns" of tomorrow) might judge them (the seventeenth-century Europeans) once they themselves became, with the inevitable passing of time, "ancients." In such fanciful moments, both parties constructed philological time machines in order to picture themselves retrospectively from some future cultural landscape.

The two parties naturally did so with different aims in mind. When an Ancient partisan such as La Bruyère commented that "we, who are so modern, will be ancient in a few centuries" ("nous, qui sommes si modernes, serons anciens dans quelques siècles"), he attempted to capitalize on the self-interest of his contemporary readers, who could understand the advantages of respecting the past once they realized that they too would one day be part of that past (*Les caractères* 11). One is only modern for a moment. Admire today the ancients of yesterday, La Bruyère argues, and tomorrow you will be repaid in kind; that is, you will be admired as the an-

cients you will inevitably become.¹¹ On the other side of the quarrel, the Modern champion Fontenelle played the same thought experiment, going so far as to imagine that the “moderns” of some future century might even be (his audacity here verging on jest) the “Americans” of that distant, primitive continent—future Americans who would one day judge the “ancient” French of the age of Louis XIV (*OC* 2:428). But here the lesson is the opposite: where La Bruyère promotes a pact of mutual respect between ages, Fontenelle denounces an admiration based on false pretenses rather than critical reason and objective criteria. He mocks the aggrandized vision these future moderns might have of his own time, and urges instead a clear-eyed impartiality in which observers see the vices of their forebears as well as their virtues. For La Bruyère, equity requires just praise of the past; for Fontenelle, lucidity requires its unsparing critique.

In either case, the profound relativity of historical perspective at play in these temporal flights of fancy suggests a certain unspecified, indeed generalized, meaning that the players in the quarrel sometimes assigned to the terms “ancient” and “modern.” In their capacious generality, the terms are occasionally diluted into nothing more than empty placeholders for the present and the past, for the “us” of today and the “them” of yesterday. They are the utterances that compose the first grunt of primitive historical consciousness: *me, modern; you, ancient*. In this sense, the quarrel itself is nothing more than a minor variation on a theme that Ernst Robert Curtius placed among his ever-recurring *topoi* of European literature. Each generation has its Oedipal rivalry with its heritage, its own “ancients and moderns.” We find ourselves in the realm of a rhetorical commonplace exploited in the partisan bickering that typifies the Darwinian literary field: “a constant phenomenon in literary history and literary sociology” (*European Literature* 251).

Seen from this angle, the quarrel would be just one in a series in which ancient and modern are variants whose meaning is to be assigned according to the historical situation in question. There is undoubtedly some truth to this reading, particularly when we consider that these quarrels break out not everyday, but at crucial junctures in time when, as H. R. Jauss has pointed out, there develops a radical new “comprehension of the historical distance between antiquity and the immediate present,” indeed of a “caesura between antiquity and modern times” (“La ‘modernité’” 172–73). The late seventeenth century, we will see, is the perfect example of such a moment of rupture and transition, and the quarrel frequently turns to questions of historical identity and otherness. And yet it is important to understand that, though Ancient and Modern partisans played frequently on the rhetorical antithesis of self and other, the quarrel nevertheless gives

rise to surprisingly complex and historically nuanced conceptualizations of such antinomies.

Modern Ancients, or Apogees of Classicism

To better understand these nuances, let us consider first the “other” of the quarrel, the “ancient.” It is no accident that antiquity is invested with a rich complexity rarely matched by the often more superficial use of “modern.” The quarrel was, after all, fought principally over the past, not the present day. The Modern party was on the offensive; it penetrated immediately into the terrain of antiquity, systematically attacking its key fortresses. In response, the Ancient party limited itself largely to a defense of the pagan past. This is in part due to the fact that the Ancient party leaders were themselves people of the present day, “moderns” aiming to please a modern audience quite proud of its own achievements. The defenders of Homer, generally men and women with contemporary literary ambitions, were hardly bent on a suicide mission of denigrating the public upon whose readership they depended—nor on demeaning, for that matter, their very own works, which by definition were also modern.

The vast majority of the pages penned during the quarrel thus concerned the nature of classical antiquity. When used generically, the term applies to what we might call the “long millennium” spanning the time from Homer to the fall of Rome. But the true interest of the quarrel is found in the pages that abandon this generic notation and develop instead a keen appreciation of the widely different historical moments encompassed under the term “ancient.” The players in the quarrel, as I have suggested, forged substantial new ground by distinguishing separate states of evolution within Greco-Roman antiquity. This disaggregation of the classical past is due in large part to the new theories of human progress that the Modern party so heartily embraced, and to which I will return. What is important for the moment is that this new vision of progress splintered the ancient world. The past was now perceived as a series of dynamic stages: classical Athens presented a leap of progress over the primitive Homeric world, just as imperial Rome presented yet another leap forward over the ages of Pericles or Alexander.¹² The Middle Ages were of course decried on both sides as a temporary regression, preceding either a restitution of previous glory (the Ancient position) or a new leap forward to the unprecedented achievements of the contemporary world (the Modern position).

To understand how the paradigm of progress upsets any homogenized vision of antiquity (and sometimes blurs the demarcation between ancient and modern), consider the case of imperial Rome. The Modern apologists,

despite the apparent interests of their party, often heaped praise on classical Rome, now seen as the most “modern” of the ancient ages, the final and most advanced stage in the evolution of antiquity. The Modern apologists did so, of course, only to better decry the primitiveness of Rome’s predecessor, Greece, now viewed as what Perrault called the “most ancient among the ancients” (“les plus anciens d’entre les anciens”).¹³ As Fontenelle remarked in his own Modern manifesto, the 1688 *Digression*: “There was a time when the Romans were moderns, and they complained of the infatuation that people had for the Greeks, who were then the ancients” (“Un temps a été que les Latins étaient modernes, et alors ils se plaignaient de l’entêtement que l’on avait pour les Grecs, qui étaient les anciens”; *OC* 2:428). Fontenelle is thinking here no doubt of Cicero, whom we have already seen cited by Perrault (who likewise labels the Latin orator a true “modern” when compared to his predecessors) for vaunting Roman advances over the earlier Greeks.¹⁴

It is only natural then that Modern apologists make a point of consistently praising Virgil at Homer’s expense, for, as Perrault remarked:

I find a great difference between the works of Homer and those of Virgil. To the same degree that the first, though admirable in certain spots, seem full of vulgarity, puerility, and foolishness, so the second seem to me filled with refinement, seriousness, and reason; all of which is explained by the different time periods in which they wrote, and that *Virgil is more modern than Homer by eight or nine hundred years*.

[...] je mets une grande différence entre les ouvrages d’Homère et ceux de Virgile. Autant que ceux du premier, quoiqu’admirables en certains endroits, me paraissent pleins de grossièreté, de puérilité, et d’extravagance; autant ceux du dernier me semblent remplis de finesse, de gravité, et de raison: ce qui ne vient que de la différence des temps où ils ont écrit, et de ce que *Virgile est plus moderne qu’Homère de huit ou neuf cents ans*. (*Parallèle* 3:125–26; italics mine).

Indeed, the modernity of the Roman Augustan age—its “refinement, seriousness, and reason”—allows it to stand in for modern France itself. Thus Fontenelle, in *De l’origine des fables*, conflates the Age of Louis XIV and that of Augustus, tightly bound by their common superiority over the irrationality of Greek mythical thinking: “Once a time came when people had keener intelligence, such as in the Age of Augustus and in our own, one preferred reason” (“dans le temps où l’on a eu plus d’esprit, comme dans le siècle d’Auguste et dans celui-ci, on a aimé à raisonner”; 22). Oddly

enough, it is therefore the Moderns, more than the Ancients, who flattered the king with comparisons to the Roman model of perfection.

Seen from this angle, Ancients and Moderns appear simply to be two contending sects within an all-encompassing Ancient party: the Modern party was, in many ways, the Augustan party; the Ancient party, the Homeric one. Consider, for example, Houdar de La Motte in the dedication of his 1714 *Iliad* to Louis XIV:

I admit that what Homer misses, in order to be worthy of you, is to have lived under the reign of Augustus, or under your own. It is true that he depicted heroes that are often compared to Your Majesty, but I have strongly felt, in studying them, that their ancient reputation is sorely misplaced in this parallel, and that one should never have honored them with your virtues.

J'avoue qu'il a manqué à Homère, pour être digne de vous, d'avoir vécu sous le règne d'Auguste, ou sous le Vôtre. Il est vrai qu'il peint des héros à qui l'on a souvent comparé Votre Majesté; mais j'ai trop senti, en les étudiant, qu'on a abusé de leur ancienne réputation dans ce parallèle, et qu'on n'a jamais dû leur faire honneur de vos vertus. (*OC* 1:180)

Despite this equation between the Roman emperor and the French monarch, a zealous Modern proponent like La Motte would, in the final analysis, no doubt agree with Perrault that “our own century is more learned, more delicate and more polite than that of Augustus” (“notre siècle est plus savant, plus délicat et plus poli que celui d'Auguste”; *Parallèle* 2:190). Still, seen from the long view, the age of Augustus could claim a close kinship to that of Louis XIV, at least when contrasted with the primitive crudeness of Homer's time.

Furthermore, the Moderns affirm that the dark times depicted by Homer began to dissipate even before the Augustan apex, even among the Greeks, particularly during the Athenian “classical age.” The rise of philosophy—and the moral, intellectual, and artistic progress it brought—begins, according to this view, with Plato's salubrious critique in the *Republic* of Homer's ignorance and immorality. Plato (occasionally with Socrates) is indeed the earliest model for the Modern party. Once philosophy begins its march, it continues from the audacious but primitively “obscure” Plato through the struggling Aristotle to the triumph of Descartes. So Perrault remarks on the succession from the first Greek thinkers to today: “as one moves from philosopher to philosopher the light increases, and finally one reaches those of our century, and we find ourselves in full daylight” (“à mesure qu'on passe de philosophe en philosophe la lumière

s'augmente, et enfin quand on arrive à ceux de notre siècle, on se trouve en plein jour").¹⁵

The Modern party's use of Greek philosophy against ancient Greece itself was brilliantly pioneered by Fontenelle a few years before the inauguration of the quarrel in his 1683 *New Dialogues of the Dead*, a collection of playful conversations set in the Elysian fields and appropriately enough inspired by an archly skeptical ancient, Lucian. In a dialogue devoted to the subject of human progress, Fontenelle places the defense of the Modern cause not where his reader might most expect it, in the mouth of a contemporary philosopher, but instead in that of Socrates himself. Once again, Fontenelle's appropriation of Socrates' voice perfectly illustrates one of the great rhetorical tricks of the Modern party: to make the ancients speak against their own interests. We have seen it at work with Perrault's ventriloquism through his dummy Cicero; La Motte will most brilliantly exploit the device by having the ghost of Homer denounce the crudeness and ignorance of his *own* poetry.¹⁶ In all these cases, the Moderns seek to turn the quarrel into one of *ancients against ancients*, thus once again taking the battle entirely into enemy lines.

In paradoxical symmetry, Fontenelle's dialogue anoints as the spokesperson of the Ancient position not an illustrious figure of the Greco-Roman world but a writer of the modern world—though not a contemporary, but rather a man of the past century, Montaigne, representing the now crumbling Renaissance idolization of antiquity.¹⁷ In reply to Montaigne's praise of Greek virtue, Socrates' first reaction is to denounce the foolishness of his own time, which he labels the "idiocies of antiquity" ("sottises de l'antiquité"; *OC* 1:84). But Fontenelle's Socrates is not simply acting the role of the gadfly here, ready to critique any complaisant view of his age. No, he goes further, elucidating a positive vision of progress in which the "idiocies" in question are to be gradually surmounted. Thus he speaks of human evolution from its ignorant origins through its slow advances to some happier future state, asserting that "from the experience of so many years [...] the world should have an old age more wise and orderly than its childhood" ("profit[ant] de l'expérience de tant d'années [...] le monde devrait avoir une vieillesse plus sage et plus réglée que n'a été sa jeunesse"; 1:84). The evolution naturally applies to his own century, which, though seen from two thousand years later may appear to be in the childhood of humanity, is at least in a *later* stage of childhood, a more advanced phase of early development that can produce a man of reason such as Socrates.¹⁸ If the Athenian philosopher finds many "idiocies" to deplore in his own age, one can only imagine their profusion in earlier, even more puerile and

ignorant times, such as those of Homer. In the face of a common enemy constituted by a remote unenlightened past, Fontenelle happily finds in Socrates a Modern ally among the ancients.

This kind of surprising interpenetration of temporal categories operates not only in analyses of ancient times, but also in those of the recent past—and, indeed, of the present day. Just as the period's thinkers discover that certain ancients (like Socrates and Virgil) are more "modern," so too they find that certain moderns are more "ancient." Some of this categorical confusion follows chronology: the "ancient" moderns are simply the first writers of postantiquity, or of what is called the Middle Ages. Thus in 1646 Chapelain coins the term "Antiquité moderne" for the medieval period.¹⁹ In many ways this "modern antiquity" was seen as reigning until the very recent past, that is, until the apparition of Descartes in philosophy and, in poetry, of Malherbe, the first great model of French neoclassical style.²⁰ On this both Ancients and Moderns seemed in large agreement, for even Boileau, as we will see, generally regarded Renaissance and baroque writers with a somewhat "Modern" disdain for their primitive disorder and rudeness.²¹ As a representative of the Renaissance past, Montaigne can thus be easily appropriated by Fontenelle as something of an "ancient modern."

Yet the existence of an antiquity within modernity is not limited to such purely chronological schemata. For there seemed to exist even in the contemporary moment many people who still belonged, if you just scratched the surface, to ancient times. Thus Modern apologists regularly decry those that they see as the avatars of antiquity in their midst—those who have somehow resisted the implacable flow of contemporary progress. Chief among these anachronistic oddities in the age of Louis XIV were, of course, some of the Ancient party leaders, those who not only admired the past but still clung to the ancients' way of thinking.²² Yet there was an even larger group of recalcitrant primitives in their midst. Indeed, the majority of the population is relegated by Modern apologists to the status of primitive "ancients": such are the lower classes and, in particular, the peasants, whom Perrault repeatedly compares to Homeric figures in their rustic simplicity and superstitious puerility. And we will furthermore see the importance of the geographical counterpart to the European peasant, the savage of the New World, who equally proves an anachronistic ancient in modern times.

The truly "modern" moderns are thus a relatively happy and enlightened few. And a few of these shining moderns, such as Fontenelle's Socrates, even managed to thrive in the very heart of dark antiquity.

Ancient Ancients, or the Preclassical

What was the Ancient party response to this view of a progressive (if fitful) evolution that split antiquity asunder and pitted advanced ancients like Socrates or Augustus against primitive ones like Homer? First, the Ancient position was hardly a wholesale attack on the basic paradigm of progress. As I have suggested, Ancient apologists were cultivated people of the modern world and generally great admirers of the advances of modern science. Boileau mocked, for example, the resistance of the conservative, neo-Aristotelian Sorbonne to Harvey's new model of the circulation of blood.²³ In short, Ancient partisans easily conceded that the sciences advance through an accumulation of knowledge over time; in this domain, the later ancients were therefore superior to the earlier ones, just as the moderns of today surpass the most advanced ancients. Ancient partisans thus largely limited themselves to a defense of the nonscientific domains of antiquity, sometimes including morality, religion, and politics, but most pointedly concerning the areas of literature (in their terms, "poetry" and "eloquence") and the arts (particularly music, painting, and sculpture).

And here the defenders of antiquity took the offensive, for they went straight to the heart of the matter. To more effectively refute the application of the paradigm of modern progress in the arts, they returned to the beginning, to the era least contaminated by progress and thus the most isolated case study possible. In so doing, they too viewed antiquity as a series of clearly differentiated stages in time, and, as defenders of the ancients, they logically concentrated their energies on what Perrault dismissed as the "most ancient of the ancients." Where the Moderns approved Virgil's refinement, the Ancients celebrated instead Homer's untamed genius, his natural inspiration, and his originality. The ground had already been laid, as I earlier suggested, thirteen years before the quarrel officially began, with Boileau's translation and preface of Longinus's *On the Sublime*, whose banner example is Homer. (It is revealing that the Ancient party was to be known precisely as the "Cabale du Sublime.") Perrault aimed directly at the primary target in his opening shot in the quarrel, *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*, where Homer is the main object of literary demolition.

The first Ancient party riposte to *Le siècle* is particularly instructive on this point. In his *Discours sur les anciens*, Longepierre appropriately devotes five times more space to Homer (over thirty pages) than to Virgil (six pages).²⁴ But more important is the profoundly historical reading he gives to the epic poet. The primeval Homer allows Longepierre to measure the incomparability of that poet's times to the modern age. In contrast to later, more advanced Greek or Roman poets, the first epic poet lived in "an age

that was still not refined and was as distant from us by its manners as by the immense space of time that lies between the two [ages]" ("un siècle encore peu poli et aussi éloigné de nous par les manières, que par l'espace immense de temps qui est entre deux"; *Discours* 101). Longepierre defends not an antiquity that is sympathetically close, or easily relevant, to his readers, but one that is the "most distant" imaginable.²⁵

The sense of the "immense space of time" between Homer's Greece and modern France is accentuated by the distinct milestones measuring and marking the distance separating Longepierre's readers from what he calls "those first times" ("ces premiers temps"), those of the "first men" ("premiers hommes"; *Discours* 94–95). The existence of what follows those origins, of such intermediary figures between Homer and the present as Roman civilization, only further highlights the primordial foreignness of those he celebrates. Thus his rather tepid praise of Virgil concentrates on the poet's advanced, refined (and, Perrault might say, "modern") qualities of "solid judgment," "right reason" and "infallible good sense" ("solidité de jugement," "droite raison" and "ce bon sens exact qui ne s'égar[e] jamais"; 129–32). Homer, on the other hand, is praised for closeness to primal "nature," rather than for refined "art"; the Greek poet's native "sublimité," unlike Virgil's disciplined "exactitude," veers into unpolished irregularity (105–7). This preference for the first in the series rather than for what follows is perhaps best summed up in Longepierre's praise for Menander, whose Latin adaptor Terence is "nothing but a shadow and weak copy" ("Ménandre dont [...] Térence lui-même n'est qu'une ombre et une faible copie"; 126). And, as Longepierre says of all such adaptations, imitations, and translations of an earlier original, "the shadow is less than the body, and the image less than the object itself" ("l'ombre est moindre que le corps et l'image que l'objet"; 56).²⁶

This predilection for the Greek source, for Menander over Terence, for Homer over Virgil, for the more foreign original over the more familiar imitation, reveals what we will later see to be some striking tensions at the heart of neoclassical aesthetics. The seeds were sown as early as Boileau's 1674 *Art poétique*, where the Ancient partisan confers "to the Greeks this divine elevation / Which Latin frailty never attained" ("chez les Grecs cette hauteur divine / Où jamais n'atteignit la faiblesse latine"; III, in *OC* 171). But the consequences of this preference extend far beyond the question of poetic and artistic models. It strikes at the very understanding of historical time. In particular, the stark divisions that emerge during the quarrel between the Greek and Roman epochs (as well as the subdivisions within these temporal categories) demonstrate the extent to which any Renaissance idealization of a Greco-Roman synthetic whole largely collapsed

during the quarrel. It is something of a historiographic commonplace that the mid-eighteenth century saw the “unitary conception” of antiquity “explode and fragment” as “Greeks and Romans were treated increasingly as competing models and not parallel ones.”²⁷ It was, of course, to the Hellenophiles that the victory would be given by the later Enlightenment and German neoclassicism—and even more triumphantly, by the Romantics. Yet several generations before the astonishing rediscovery of well-preserved Greek and Hellenistic works in southern Italy (Herculaneum in 1738; Pompeii in 1748), before Winckelmann’s *History of the Art of Antiquity* (1764), and before what is called the Greek Revival or *retour à l’antique* of the second half of the eighteenth century, the debates of the quarrel, reread throughout the next century, laid the groundwork for the coming Greek-Roman rivalry and for the new preference given to the earlier, more remote period.²⁸ And the quarrel, precisely with its interest not only in the classical Greece of Sophocles or Plato but, more importantly with the *preclassical* world of the Homeric age—what Fontenelle called the world of “the most ancient Greeks, still savage” (“des plus anciens Grecs encore sauvages”; *OC* 5:547)—also opened the path for the various “primitivisms” of the Enlightenment, and its taste for the “noble savage,” whose debt in particular to the *querelle d’Homère* (1711–17) was, as we will see, immense.

To return to Longepierre, the progressive dissolution of the “synthetic” or “unitarian” view of antiquity during the quarrel—the keen awareness of the radical changes brought about by what he calls “the long number of years which separate us from the ancients” (“la longue suite d’années qui nous sépare des anciens”; *Discours* 67)—brings with it new challenges. Historical consciousness encourages an intellectual exercise that disturbs easy habits. Longepierre is strikingly lucid about the difficulty in spanning the gulf in time, about the arduous task of overcoming one’s own fixed and limited perspective. Only continual vigilance, a self-imposed but rewarding discipline, can allow a modern reader to temporarily “lose sight of his century” and to imagine without “prejudice” such remote peoples and cultures, to “enter without trouble into their different tastes, and to grant to each [separate historical period] the qualities proper to it” (“entre[r] sans peine dans leurs goûts différents, [et] rendre à chacun ce qui lui est propre”; 100–101).

Historicism and Universalism

In the middle of what is called the French “Classical” age, Longepierre’s impassioned call for modern readers of ancient texts to awake to their profound difference—and, in the process, to cultivate a strenuously histo-

ricizing self-discipline—should, I think, go a long way in dismantling a rather deadly commonplace of literary history, according to which, to cite an exemplary formula by Auerbach, “the age [of Louis XIV] felt itself to be in accord with the golden ages of antique civilization” (*Mimesis* 389). For Auerbach, as for a whole tradition of scholarship, ancient models were for French classicism an “extrahistorical” quarry for an “eternally human” subject matter situated “out of time and place” (387, 389). According to this view, the second half of the seventeenth century experienced no troubling awareness of a temporal distance from a Greco-Roman past that, far from being “associated with ideas of a primitive culture,” was idealized as a decorous, civilized model beyond time’s reach (389). In short, historical difference appears unknown to the neoclassical author. The present study, of course, assumes that the classical age is, at least as concerns the basic understanding of the arts and their relation to history, a period of fundamental transition and intense conflict.²⁹

It is nevertheless undeniable that a certain universalist strain was still frequently at play on both sides of the quarrel. Consider for example one of the most famous expressions of this atemporal universalism, from the author that Auerbach, among many others, considers its most illustrious spokesperson: Racine. Here is the tragic playwright commenting in 1674 on his version of Euripides’ *Iphigenia*:

The taste of Paris has been found to conform to that of Athens; my spectators have been moved by the same thing which, in other times, brought tears to the most cultivated and learned people of Greece.

Le goût de Paris s’est trouvé conforme à celui d’Athènes. Mes spectateurs ont été émus des mêmes choses qui ont mis autrefois en larmes le plus savant peuple de la Grèce. (*OCI*, 699)

Much has been made of this remark. Clifford Geertz, in his effort to elaborate later theories of cultural difference, cites it as the perfect representation of neoclassicism’s rejection of such difference. Racine, he asserts, typifies here the “uniformitarian view of man” according to which there exists “a constant human nature independent of time [...], transient fashions and temporary opinions.”³⁰ Inasmuch as the current culture defines the norm that is applied across the board (in this case, inasmuch as ancient Athens is defined through the lens of Racine’s Paris), Geertz’s “uniformitarianism” is nothing but what has been called the ethnocentrism inherent in the French classical spirit.³¹ It is, to use another term, the “presentism” of all classicisms, the equation of contemporary standards with timeless ideals. But, according to an established historical paradigm, the

days of this neoclassical and early Enlightenment uniformitarianism are numbered. For the reaction is coming, in the form of new disciplines that begin their march in the late eighteenth century: “whatever else modern anthropology asserts, [...] it is firm in the conviction that men unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist” (Geertz, *Interpretation* 35). With their sensitivity to the complexity of human diversity, the new human sciences are thus seen as a reaction—and antidote—to what we might call the Racine Complex.

So too is historicism. It is no surprise that Isaiah Berlin, when seeking to define the universalism characteristic of neoclassicism, turns to the same lines by Racine to demonstrate how “cultural differences are stripped off” by neoclassical authors who are “convinced that the central values of civilized men everywhere, and at all times, were, more or less, identical” (*Crooked Timber* 73, 76). In Berlin’s somewhat schematic rendering, Racine, like Voltaire, stands as something of a straw man against which he pits the coming revolution in historical thinking. That revolution has a hero: the first great pioneer would be Giambattista Vico, whose 1725 *Scienza nuova* opened the path to a true historicist approach characterized by an acute consciousness of “cultural pluralism, according to which each authentic culture has its own unique vision, its own scale of values” (*Crooked Timber* 59).³² Although Berlin does suggest some earlier roots for this awareness of cultural diversity,³³ most often Vico’s insight is characterized as a sudden eruption in European thought. Thus Berlin asks:

Did the idea of what a culture is, and what it is to understand it in its unity and variety, and its likeness, but above all, its unlikeness to other cultures, which undermines the doctrine of the identity of civilisation and scientific progress conceived as the cumulative growth of knowledge—did this spring fully armed like Pallas Athena out of his head? Who, before 1725, had such thoughts? (*Against the Current* 110).

We have now begun to see that quite a few “had such thoughts.” Vico was hardly, as Berlin claims, the “first to draw our attention to the strangeness of ancient cultures” (*Roots* 4). Racine himself, despite certain claims concerning the universality of his Greek models, developed at the same time a quite contrary argument promoting the alterity of antiquity and defamiliarizing the pagan classics. Indeed, central to the playwright’s project was his effort to employ cultural differences to shake his audience out of the dulling habits of normal vision and to force them to use what he called an “other eye” for tragic spectacles, one entirely separate from that used for everyday contemporary life. Just as La Bruyère would later do, Racine greatly valued the attractions held by “manners and customs completely

different" ("des mœurs et des coutumes toutes différentes") from the audience's own: "the respect that we have for heroes increases in direct proportion to their distance from us" ("le respect que l'on a pour les héros augmente à mesure qu'ils s'éloignent de nous").³⁴ And for Racine the basic measuring stick of that distance was temporal; cultural difference, even among contemporary societies, was gauged by comparisons to historical change. In a word, antiquity defined distance.³⁵

The stakes are now clear. If one chooses to ignore the kind of historicizing moves that we have seen made by Longepierre or Perrault, and takes instead Vico's writings as the more or less spontaneous eruption *ex nihilo* of theories of cultural difference, the quarrel, anterior to this revolution, must remain the affair of a temporal flat earth deprived of the least historical topography. This, unfortunately, is very often the case. It explains Berlin's vision of both the Ancient and Modern parties: "the opponents in the conflict defended their positions in terms of identical values which both sides considered to be eternally applicable to all times and all forms of art" (*Crooked Timber* 66). Some recent studies of the quarrel, though rich in insight, have done little to overcome this view. The Modern party is granted some inkling of the otherness of antiquity, but dares not exploit it. The Ancients, on the other hand, seem interested only in continuity, in reassuring identity with the classical world. What a leading historian of the quarrel, Joseph Levine, refers to as *ancienneté* proves, according to this perspective, to be simply a conservative force (even though its defenders are often, in his mind, astute and convincing): "*Ancienneté* was thus the basic inheritance of the Restoration gentleman, as it had been earlier, reinforced now by a repugnance to the profoundly disturbing revolutionary events that had so recently challenged both the social order and the classics."³⁶ The Ancients supposedly thus defend the classics as a timeless model, not only for literary production, but for moral order; they exhibited a "happy confidence in antiquity" and in the "immediate example of the past" (Levine, *Battle* 416).³⁷

We have seen, however, that the thinkers of the time hardly share "identical values" in this regard, and that antiquity is a divided—and divisive—site whose strangeness spurs new historical and aesthetic paradigms. Indeed, far from being an "immediate example of the past," the Greek antiquity that emerges from the first polemics of the quarrel is one that in many respects is simply incomparable with the present. And here the Ancient party leads the charge. While Perrault proposes a parallel between the ancient and modern worlds (even while occasionally admitting the difficulty of comparing such disparate ages), Longepierre goes so far as to assert the very incommensurability of ancient and modern. Parallels

are vain, for the first often has nothing to do with the second. To compare them, without taking serious account of their fundamental differences is either ludicrous speculation or historical ineptitude. Consider, for example, Longepierre's response to Perrault's assertion that the gardens of Alcinous in the *Odyssey* are vastly inferior to modern French ones:

[Perrault] uses the occasion to praise the magnificence of Versailles; and in praising it, to rant against Homer. But what did Homer have in common with this palace?

on prend occasion de louer la magnificence de Versailles; et en la louant, de se déchaîner encore contre Homère. Qu'avait-il de commun avec ce palais? (*Discours* 150–51)

For Longepierre, the answer is of course “nothing.” Homeric gardens and Versailles have no “common” connection; one is all “simple nature,” the other all “art,” each according to the dictates of its age. The first cannot be an effective model to imitate for the second, nor the second an effective standard to judge the first. As Molière's Angélique said in 1673, “The ancients, Sir, are the ancients, and we are the people of today.” Or as Saint-Evremond phrased it a few years earlier, when defining the incommensurability of antiquity (in particular that of the Near East) and French modernity: “a dissimilarity in ways of reasoning [...], a morality, a wisdom singular to their religion, seem to govern and drive other kinds of minds in another world” (“une diversité de raison [...], une morale, une sagesse singulière à la région, y sembl[ent] régler et conduire d'autres esprits dans un autre monde”).³⁸ This celebration of historical diversity is the rallying call of the Ancients from the initial flashes of the quarrel, with Boileau's 1674 attack in *l'Art poétique* against the airbrushing of ancient *mores* that he claims dulls contemporary novels, to the end of the quarrel, with Jean Boivin's 1715 manifesto in favor of historical realism, summed up in this simple formula:

If the heroes of Homer's age do not resemble the heroes of our own century, this difference, far from displeasing us, should give us pleasure.

Si les héros du siècle d'Homère ne ressemblent pas aux héros de notre siècle, cette différence, bien loin de nous déplaire, devrait nous faire plaisir. (*Apologie* 47)

If such statements effectively undermine the predominant vision of an ahistoricist and traditionalist Ancient party, it should be noted that they have not gone entirely unnoticed by a scholarly countercurrent led by forceful,

if intermittent, voices in the past half-century, from E. B. O. Borgerhoff to Noémi Hepp and Chantal Grell.³⁹ It is, however, perhaps H. U. Gumbrecht's pages on the quarrel in "A History of the Concept 'Modern'" that offer the most incisive case for the Ancient party's critical role in the rise of historical consciousness in the later eighteenth century. Gumbrecht points out that, against the universalist approach to reason and propriety embraced by the Moderns, the Ancients responded "that art can be judged only by the taste of its own time" ("History," in *Making Sense* 85). However, while granting these pioneers their due, he also limits their immediate influence: the "*Querelle's* insight into the inner laws and characteristic values of different periods" is only fully "recognized" by writers of the later German eighteenth century, in particular by Herder—and then only fully "assimilated by the language norm" in the early nineteenth century (88–89, 92). It is no doubt true that a fully elaborated philosophy of history arising from the Ancients' embrace of cultural difference will have to wait for future generations, whether that of Vico, Herder, or Michelet. But we will see that, piecemeal as these early reflections on ancient otherness may be, they are, in and of themselves, still explosive and, as such, hardly lie quite as fallow as Gumbrecht suggests in the succeeding decades of the French and British Enlightenment.⁴⁰ In fact, they nourish the great thinkers who were influenced by the quarrel: whether it be Montesquieu's interest in the diversity of cultures and climates, so determinant in political constitutions; or Voltaire's fascination with the variety of manners and customs through time, which he freely admits determines individual behavior and social norms much more than the limited sway of unvarying human nature;⁴¹ or, perhaps most powerfully, Hume's bold assertion, perfectly echoing Ancient apologists such as Longepierre or Boivin, that there may be no more "agreeable entertainment to the mind than to be transported into the remotest ages of the world, and to observe human society, in its infancy."⁴² That for Hume this delight in ancient otherness is qualified as an "entertainment" designed less for the utility of the intellect than for the pleasures of the "senses" and the "imagination" might well prove, in the end, to be his greatest homage to the thinkers of the quarrel who strove to liberate those nonrational faculties from the empire of methodical reason.

2 * Asserting Modernity

Renaissance Roots: Humanism and New Worlds

We have now begun to see ample evidence during the quarrel of a rising sensibility to the diversity of historical cultures. But there remains a simple question to ask. Why then? What made the last decades of the European seventeenth century, particularly in France, such an auspicious time for this awakening? There are indeed some striking developments in Louis XIV's reign—political, social, and, above all, intellectual—that make the age a period of rupture with the past. The moment was ripe for a divorce with antiquity, be it a happy one for the Modern party, or a perversely passionate one for the Ancients. Yet it must also be admitted that the divorce was a long time coming. The roots of the separation lie deep in a Renaissance culture that was nearing its end. In particular, two critical developments, sometimes working in tandem, had come in the preceding two centuries to gradually distance antiquity: the discoveries of humanist philology, and those of naval exploration.

It is one of the great paradoxes of intellectual history that the “rediscovery” of antiquity by the first Italian humanists served to distance the very epoch they adored, and to whose grandeur they wished to return. The problem arose in part from what lay between the Renaissance and its beloved classical past, that millennial “middle time” which separated it from what it wished to recapture. In the wake of Petrarch's declaration that the period between Rome's decline and the current cultural rebirth constituted the “dark ages,” there emerges a new organization of historical time, featuring a radical tripartition: the antithetical couple of ancient and modern is now sundered by the new third term of the “medieval.” A kind of temporal no man's land—the strange “modern antiquity” of which we

have seen Chapelain speak—thus arises between the present and the ancients, who, as Jauss phrased it, are now paradoxically “further away in time, though closer in spirit” (“La ‘modernité’” 172).¹

“Closer in spirit” though these ancients might at first appear to the humanists, they were soon to become a bit too close for comfort. In order to bring back a faraway past—to create the conditions for its rebirth, as the term “Renaissance” suggests—philologists engaged in a massive scholarly recovery project in which they recovered a little more than they initially bargained for. Driven by an admiration for antiquity, they sought to reconstruct a full knowledge, not only of its languages, but also of its political structures, religious practices, and social and sexual *mores*. And what they found was disturbingly unfamiliar. It is thus no surprise that in the past decades historiographers have pinpointed the rise of a certain protohistoricism—a jarring awareness, two centuries or more before Vico and Herder, of the “variety rather than the uniformity of human nature”—right in the heart of the Renaissance and its research into the “remoteness and alien character of antiquity.”²

And if an awareness of the vast chasm separating them from the Greco-Roman past led humanists to devise, as Anthony Grafton suggests, “the methods of historical philology in order to bring themselves closer to it,” then the natural but cruel outcome of their philological research was in fact to lead them not “closer to” their adored antiquity, but instead further away from it—or rather *it* further away from *them*.³ Seen from this perspective, the humanist infatuation with antiquity unfolds something like the sad arc of romance embodied in the cliché “I love you, you’re perfect, now change.” The more one learns of the loved object, the more its imperfections are first visible, then unavoidable; impassioned identification thus gives way to painful decoupling. Such is the trauma that the scholars of antiquity experience in their relation to the classical past. The Moderns in this regard prove to be the unlikely inheritors of certain Renaissance philologists whose critical investigations led them to first break a few ancient idols. To cite one key example, Julius Caesar Scaliger’s merciless catalogue of the faults of Homer in his influential 1561 commentary of Aristotle’s *Poetics* provided, as earlier noted, rich fodder for Perrault’s later attacks on the *Iliad*.⁴ And the more radical turn that the philological method takes in the hands of a Spinoza or Bentley will, as we shall see, shape the Modern attack in some surprising ways.⁵ However, the Ancient party, as witnessed by Longepierre’s remarks on the “most remote” Greeks, is equally the heir of this philological distancing of antiquity. Whereas the Modern party says “now change!” to a defective past—and tries to effectuate a kind of total makeover of ancient literary works through its modernized adapta-

tions and bowdlerizations—the Ancient party displays a kind of perverse infatuation with what Moderns see as the most shocking imperfections of the past. The Ancients embrace a passionate, if tormented, fidelity to their blemished beloved, while the Moderns pursue a therapeutic transformation of it.

In either case, the contending parties live in the intellectual world shaped by humanist philological methods, methods that so distance antiquity that Claude Lévi-Strauss labeled them a “technique of estrangement”—a heuristic “confrontation” of one’s own culture with another that constitutes nothing less than a “first form of ethnology.”⁶ But of course another form of ethnology was taking shape during the century and a half preceding the quarrel. This one arose not from a historical divide, but from a geographic one. The discovery of the New World, and the efforts to understand, or simply describe, its different cultures, transform the understanding not only of the present globe but also of the ancient past.

Like the “invention” of the Middle Ages, the “discovery” of the Americas introduces its own third term serving to further separate modern Europe from antiquity. The new equation concerns not simply “ancient” and “modern” but now, as François Hartog titles it, *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages*. In order to understand the “savages” of the New World, voyagers first attempted to render them familiar to their fellow Europeans through comparisons to their own “Old World” predecessors living in simpler and more primitive conditions: the ancients. They looked in particular back to the “remotest” Mediterranean past, the “first times” of preclassical and mythical antiquity, calling up images of Amazons and Atlantis.⁷ However, once the parallel between antiquity and the New World was established, it tended less to domesticate the foreign “savage” than to defamiliarize the Old World ancient. When, for example, the Amerindian was assimilated in the cultural imagination as a type of Homeric warrior, the Homeric hero, by analogical contamination, was in turn transformed into a being as alien and strange as the Amerindian. Temporal distance was now overlaid by a geographical remoteness; the Atlantic, perhaps more potently than the Middle Ages, sundered ancient and modern. “Between the ancients and us,” as Hartog phrased it, “there comes to be an ocean” (“Entre les Anciens et nous, il finira par y avoir un océan”; *Anciens* 38).

How did this oceanic distance reshape attitudes toward antiquity? Distance can of course flatter, and in the hands of the European admirers of Native American cultures, it benefited both ancients and Amerindians. Montaigne’s essays *Of Cannibals* and *Of Coaches*, widely read at the time of the quarrel, certainly were the most influential examples of this tendency. Montaigne paralleled Aztec and Incan leaders with ancient Greeks

and Romans in order to better expose the cowardly modern Europeans, the conquistadors who relied on the technological advances of gunpowder and armor to overcome people who relied on military courage and valor alone, and whose “goodness, liberality, loyalty, and frankness” left them defenseless against modern greed, ambition, and deception (*Essais* III.6.909). Ancients and Amerindians are one. Caesar would have been at the same disadvantage as Montezuma, Montaigne speculates. The essayist proceeds to dream of his perfect fantasy battle of anachronistic peers in valor and virtue: why was the New World raped by moderns, asks Montaigne, and “why did not such a noble conquest fall to Alexander or to those ancient Greeks and Romans?” (“Que n’est tombé soubz Alexandre ou soubz ces anciens Grecs et Romains une si noble conquête [...]?”; III.6.910). The passing of time may be erased in Montaigne’s atemporal battlefield, where Alexander and Montezuma are fused, but the coupling of ancients and Amerindians creates a powerful rival to the modern world: an oddly alien hybrid, the Greco-Roman Aztec, that seems opposed in every custom and code to present-day Europe.⁸

Though adroitly exploited by an admirer of antiquity such as Montaigne, the analogy between the New World and the ancient one hardly proves fatal to the Modern cause. A century later, for example, Fontenelle cleverly turns Montaigne’s parallel against the ancients, and uses it not to inflate but to *deflate* both Greeks and Amerindians—and especially Greeks. I return here to his *New Dialogues of the Dead*, where Fontenelle again takes issue with Montaigne—who is, we have seen, the emblematic “ancient” in the modern world—and with his idealization of the alien other, be it Greek or Aztec.⁹ Fontenelle does so with an imaginary Elysian conversation between Montezuma and Cortez. To Cortez’s assertions that the Aztecs were childishly ignorant to believe that the Spanish were gods, Montezuma retorts that his people’s credulity may have been foolish, but that they were hardly different in this respect from the ancients of the European past. Indeed, the Athenians, so easily fooled by pagan oracles and trickeries, “were even bigger dupes than we were,” jabs Montezuma, who goes on to ridicule the Greeks for believing that at Delphi “the knowledge of the future was contained in an underground hole, coming forth in exhalations” (“la science de l’avenir était contenue dans un trou souterrain, d’où elle sortait en exhalaisons”; *OC* 1:207–8).

In short, Fontenelle uses his audience’s widely perceived notions of Aztec superstitions and irrationality to highlight what he labels the even greater “Greek and Roman idiocies” of antiquity.¹⁰ By a process of Americanized defamiliarization, what were once the poetically prestigious Delphic oracles become as strange—and for Fontenelle, as little worthy of

respect—as Aztec temples. The same strategy can be applied to moral, as well as religious or philosophical, matters. And indeed Fontenelle's ally Perrault does so a few years later in his preface to the *Parallèle*. In a passage attacking the brutal morals of the ancient Greeks, Perrault argues that they are not only repellent to the cultural attitudes of modern France, but so crude and savage as to be unacceptable to any other civilization, unacceptable even, Perrault protests, to the most primitive, “even to the Iroquois.”¹¹ The lesson Perrault draws here is that the ancient Greek is more foreign, more unnatural and unreasonable, than the Amerindian, for whom, it should be noted, we find elsewhere in Perrault little respect of the multicultural kind. The “savage” here acts perfectly its role of distancing ancient from modern. The “Iroquois” prove to be less strange and less barbarous than “our own” savages, those of the Greek past.¹²

Turning back to Perrault's opponents, we find that despite their willingness to defamiliarize antiquity, Ancient apologists are not ready to adopt Montaigne's parallel between the Greco-Roman universe and the “savage” New World—or at least not yet quite ready in the late seventeenth century. They come quite close, but hesitate at the threshold. La Bruyère, for example, lauds the pleasures afforded by the otherness of ancient Athens, favorably comparing their “distance in time” to foreign cultures' “distance in space.” He asserts that readers are in general “less repelled by the barbarity of the manners and customs of people so far away, than instructed and even delighted by their novelty” (“moins rebutés par la barbarie des manières et des coutumes de peuples si éloignés, qu'instruits et même réjouis par leur nouveauté”), drawing an explicit parallel between the ancient Athenians and today's “Siamese, Chinese, Negroes, or Abyssinians” (*Caractères* 12). The passage shows the great debt that the Ancient party owes to the rising comparative ethnologies rendered possible by European expansion, and the references here to “Abyssinians” suggest that Ancient partisans are prepared to go far afield in their search for analogies. And yet, at the moment of the quarrel, the American “savage” is often still too savage for the defenders of Homer. It will not, however, prove to be so for their eighteenth-century heirs, who embrace, as we will see, the “primitive” American analogy, culminating no doubt in Chateaubriand's effort to create his own Homeric epic set among Louisiana's native Natchez.¹³

To conclude these reflections on the Renaissance roots of the quarrel, there is no doubt that the “old” and “new” worlds explored during the preceding centuries by classical philologists and naval explorers served to distance ancients from moderns. In this sense, the quarrel is simply fought out in the long wake of the painful loss of—or jubilant liberation from—a past that is no longer present. It is hard then to disagree with those revi-

sionist historians who argue that the quarrel does not in itself initiate, much less predate, a rupture with antiquity, but that it is instead “the final crowning of a process which began with Petrarch.”¹⁴ However, if the Renaissance past is indeed prologue to the quarrel, it remains just that: the prologue and not the story itself. For even if the preceding centuries laid the foundation for the nascent historicism at play in the quarrel, that still does not answer at least two crucial questions. First, simply affirming that both parties operated with an already established historical sensibility does not yet account for the starkly varying approaches adopted by different thinkers to that sensibility, differences that fuel the quarrel. Second, the preparatory work of the Renaissance does not answer the question of “why then?” Why should the work of two or three centuries of speculation explode precisely in the late seventeenth century with such violence into the public arena, and proceed to broadly restructure the intellectual landscape?

Progress: Cumulative Evolution or Cartesian Revolution?

Certainly no single factor in this explosion is more crucial than the scientific revolution—or, rather, what was more broadly labeled at the time as the “new philosophy” of the natural and mathematical sciences. Here again, though, it must first be admitted that the break with the past is hardly without roots in the preceding two centuries, and the players in the quarrel are well aware of it. If Perrault, for example, triumphantly celebrates contemporary industrial technologies—praising, for example, the efficiencies of garment manufacturing¹⁵—he also admits the modern debt to the Renaissance “discoveries” of the printing press and gunpowder.¹⁶ Despite the sometimes condescending recognition of such past achievements, everyone nevertheless agreed that the pace of discoveries had greatly accelerated in the century of Galileo and Harvey (awaiting the impact of Newton, who would alter the equation in surprising ways). The Modern party had every interest in proclaiming this progress as a truly revolutionary breakthrough. Nevertheless, the defenders of the ancients, far from rejecting the idea of such progress, in fact embraced it. Even Longepierre, in the middle of his impassioned defense of antiquity, uses remarkably similar language to that of Perrault and Fontenelle in praising the modern advances of “physics, astronomy, and other sciences whose perfection depends on the great number of experiments, observations and discoveries that are made each day” (“la physique, l’astronomie et de pareilles sciences, dont la perfection dépend du grand nombre d’expériences et de découvertes qu’on fait tous les jours”; *Discours* 44).

Certain theories of cumulative progress could, then, provide grounds for agreement between the parties. Fontenelle himself had to admit that the paradigm of a gradual increase in knowledge from one generation to the next necessarily implied a significant debt to the past:

Our minds are already enlightened by these same discoveries [made by the ancients] that we have before our eyes [...] and if we surpass the first inventor, it is because he himself has helped us to surpass him. He will thus always have his share in the glory of our achievement.

On a déjà l'esprit éclairé par ces mêmes découvertes [des anciens] que l'on a devant les yeux [...] et si nous surpassons le premier inventeur, c'est lui qui nous a aidés lui-même à le surpasser. Ainsi il a toujours sa part à la gloire de notre ouvrage. (*OC* 2:418)¹⁷

The model of progress by a gradual accrual of knowledge blurs ancient/modern distinctions by substantially minimizing, if not entirely eliminating, any radical alterations through time of human capacities. After all, a basic consistency is a necessary requirement for such accumulation. If human capacities declined through time, then devolving human intelligence would seriously impede the accrual of knowledge; past discoveries would be lost to future imbecility. If, on the other hand, humans greatly expanded their intellectual capacities, then the help of past discoveries would simply prove pointless to minds so vastly superior to their predecessors.¹⁸ But once it is accepted that human capacities are largely consistent, it proves only natural that each generation adds its boulder to the growing mass of knowledge. History marches forward to a slow, steady beat. The “glory” of knowledge is thus, as Fontenelle concedes, equally shared by past and present.

The idea of cumulative progress, however, does not so easily quiet the quarrel—first of all, because its picture of steady evolution is not, in the end, quite so steady nor so immune to conflicting interpretations. Both parties vary the pace of the accumulation of knowledge according to different historical circumstances that favor, or impede, intellectual progress. Thus, the Middle Ages represent, seemingly in the minds of all the writers, not only a standstill in the march forward, but a temporary regression. On the other hand, the parties could disagree on the pace of progress in other periods of time—like ancient Greece or modern Europe.

More importantly, the parties place entirely different value on the two epochs lying at either extreme of the historical continuum. Despite Fontenelle's rhetorical olive branch, the “glory” is rarely equitably shared

among the links in the chain of progress. For the Ancient partisans, it is naturally the first link, the beginning of the series, that gains the greater glory. This leads in turn to their interest in the historical conditions favoring the primal genius who opens the path to be pursued by others. For the Moderns on the other hand, it is the feat of “surpassing” others, it is the completion of the series, the “perfection” of what has come before, that distinguishes the scientist or artist. And to explain the acceleration in the pace of such “victories,” the Moderns equally take interest in the historical conditions, in the changes in thinking and institutions, which allow such moments of triumph over the past. Perrault, for example, firmly asserts that the political and cultural environment established by Louis XIV provides unique circumstances for a leap in progress (*Parallèle* 1:90). Perhaps most importantly, for the Moderns the recent advances in sciences were so great that they reached something like a tipping point, heralding a new philosophy that was qualitatively different from any in the past. Progress had now hit a critical mass that thrust the present into an entirely new age of enlightenment, one that seemed to contemporaries to relegate all rival ages to a kind of eternal dark ages. Such is Pierre Bayle’s assessment three years before the outbreak of the quarrel: “we find ourselves in a century that will become each day more enlightened, so that all the preceding centuries will be in comparison nothing but darkness” (“Ainsi nous voilà dans un siècle qui va devenir de jour en jour plus éclairé, de sorte que tous les siècles précédents ne seront que ténèbres en comparaison”).¹⁹



The gradual and cumulative progress of humanity can thus be transcended by some incomparable achievement that makes all that passed before it appear of a radically different, and vastly inferior, nature. And many of those who believed that the seventeenth century had accomplished such a happy break credited the feat not just to a loosely defined philosophical *spirit* but, more particularly, to a very precise and systematic *method*. When Fontenelle asserts that the “manner of reasoning”—which for him constitutes the very core of philosophy—has been “perfected to the extreme” in the seventeenth century, he is explicitly referring to the Cartesian method, to the application of the principles of geometry to the natural sciences, and beyond.²⁰ The so-called “Cartesian revolution” was indeed a revolution for Fontenelle, a universal revolution engulfing all domains of human knowledge and endeavor, and breaking with all previous intellectual history. Here is his account, laced with light irony concerning the sloppiness of ancient thinking, of that rupture with the past:

Before Monsieur Descartes, reasoning was a much easier matter; the past ages are very lucky not to have known that man! He is the one, it seems to me, that has brought us this new method of reasoning and thinking [...]. In any case, there now reigns, not only in our best works of physics and metaphysics, but also in those concerning religion, morality and literary criticism, a rigorous precision and exactitude that hardly existed up until present times.

Avant M. Descartes, on raisonnait plus commodément; les siècles passés sont bien heureux de n'avoir pas eu cet homme-là. C'est lui, à ce qu'il me semble, qui a amené cette nouvelle méthode de raisonner [...]. Enfin il règne non seulement dans nos bons ouvrages de physique et de métaphysique, mais dans ceux de religion, de morale, de critique, une précision et une justesse qui, jusqu'à présent, n'avaient été guère connues. (OC 2:420)

The broad sweep of Fontenelle's assertion reveals just how universally the Modern partisans in France intended to apply the Cartesian model of methodical reasoning. Just as the Ancient party became known as the "Cabale du Sublime," so the Modern party gained its own appropriate appellation: the "Geometers." I will later turn to the critical consequences of this absolutist strain of rationalism when it is imported, as Fontenelle promises, into the domain of literary criticism—and to the empiricist response of Ancient apologists who attempt to sharply delimit the "reign" of abstract reason by an appeal to concrete observation and experience in art. At issue here, though, is more specifically the impact of the Moderns' imperious rationalism on their view of historical time. And the consequences are crucial.

The Cartesian method provides a model for modern superiority that not only supplements the theory of cumulative progress—his rationalist system constitutes, after all, a powerful new addition to the swelling arsenal of intellectual tools gathered over time—but that also can be said to supersede, even demolish, this same paradigm of gradual human advancement. For in seeking a solid "foundation" for establishing certain knowledge, the rationalist method holds out the hope of breaking all reliance on the superannuated knowledge of the past. Fontenelle was deeply influenced in particular by Descartes's *Discours de la méthode*, by its rejection of "ancient books," as opposed to "pure reason," and by its skeptical dismissal of the usefulness of examples derived from accounts of the past, indeed, from "even the most faithful history."²¹ For Fontenelle, as for Descartes, this means that the accumulation of knowledge is often only an accumula-

tion of past errors. Fontenelle's celebration of the radical superiority of the Cartesian method would therefore seem to cast into serious doubt the sincerity of his aforementioned praise for ancient discoveries.

Yet Fontenelle cannot be easily accused of rank dissimulation when he claims to give the ancients their share of credit. He does indeed grant them their due, albeit with acid irony. The "glory" of the ancients, to return to Fontenelle's phrase, reveals itself to be nothing more than the dubious triumph of their having accidentally eliminated, by centuries of foolish error, all the misbegotten conceptions of which the human intellect is capable. The utility of their example is almost purely negative. So it is that in the passage we have seen in which Fontenelle honors the ancients, he wryly proceeds:

I would go so far in my fairness in this regard [of the debt to ancients], that I take into account an infinity of misconceptions that they have had, of poor reasonings they have made, and of the idiocies they have said. [...] We are obliged to the Ancients for having exhausted for us almost all of the misconceptions and errors that can possibly be made.

Je pousse si loin l'équité dont je suis sur cet article, que je tiens même compte aux anciens d'une infinité de vues fausses qu'ils ont eues, de mauvais raisonnements qu'ils ont faits, de sottises qu'ils ont dites. [...] Nous avons l'obligation aux anciens de nous avoir épuisé la plus grande partie des idées fausses qu'on se pouvait faire. (*OC* 2:418)

Antiquity is an object lesson in idiocy. In making this crucial claim, Fontenelle pioneers what will become a trademark strategy of the annals of human error practiced by the Enlightenment masters of irony, from Bayle to Voltaire, for whom history is so often what Cassirer called "purely negative work" (*Philosophy* 206).

Fontenelle's reasoning, furthermore, begs the question of humanity's actual need for such histories of ancient errors, if only to avoid them. After all, once armed with the correct method of reasoning, cannot philosophers, moralists, politicians, poets, indeed collective human society, simply arrive at the truth *ex nihilo*? Can they not discard all past knowledge, and enter the historical isolation of a kind of collective Cartesian stove, where moderns could follow, without distraction, the rigorous "chain of inferences, all of them simple and easy, that geometers normally use to construct their most difficult demonstrations" (Descartes, *Discours* part 2)? If so, the rebirth of ancient knowledge accomplished by the previous few centuries proves logically unnecessary for human advancement. Earlier humanists might have sped up progress a bit by uncovering the multitude of mis-

takes (and perhaps even by recovering a few happy achievements) made by the ancients, but real progress is driven by methodical reason alone, not by knowledge garnered from the past. The entire Renaissance might thus prove to be fundamentally superfluous:

The barbarous times [i.e., the Middle Ages] that followed that of Augustus, and preceded our own, furnish to the partisans of antiquity what appears to be the best argument they have put forth. Why is it, they say, that during all those centuries ignorance was so deep and sweeping? It is because they did not know the Greeks and Romans, they did not read them anymore: but as soon as such excellent models were once again put before their eyes, reason and good taste were reborn. That is true, but it proves nothing. [...] The reading of the ancients did dissipate the ignorance and barbarity of the previous centuries. I believe it. It suddenly gave us some ideas of the true and the beautiful that it might have taken a long time to rediscover, but that we would still have rediscovered in the end without the help of the Greeks and Romans. Where would we have found these ideas? In the very same place as the ancients found them. The ancients themselves, before they found them, had to seek a long time.

Les siècles barbares qui ont suivi celui d'Auguste, et précédé celui-ci, fournissent aux partisans de l'Antiquité celui de tous leurs raisonnements qui a le plus d'apparence d'être bon. D'où vient, disent-ils, que dans ces siècles-là l'ignorance était si épaisse et si profonde? C'est que l'on n'y connaissait plus les Grecs et les Latins, on ne les lisait plus: mais du moment que l'on se remit devant les yeux ces excellents modèles, on vit renaître la raison et le bon goût. Cela est vrai, et ne prouve pourtant rien. [...] La lecture des Anciens a dissipé l'ignorance et la barbarie des siècles précédents. Je le crois bien. Elle nous rendit tout d'un coup des idées du vrai et du beau que nous aurions été longtemps à rattraper, mais que nous eussions rattrapées à la fin sans le secours des Grecs et des Latins, si nous les avions bien cherchées. Et où les eussions-nous prises? où les avaient prises les anciens. Les anciens même, avant que de les prendre, tâtonnèrent bien longtemps. OC 2:425)

Conflicted Positions, or the Inner Quarrel

The passage just quoted is wonderfully revelatory of the broad tensions in Fontenelle's thought. Even while embracing the power of reason alone, without debt to past experience, Fontenelle still gives some due to the accrual of knowledge over time: it is not essential, but can be helpful; it pro-

vides not the truth itself, but can speed up the process of arriving at it. Knowing the ancients, he concedes, allows us to advance more rapidly than the ancients themselves did. In his conflicted relationship to past observations and experience, Fontenelle echoes that of the larger Cartesian rationalist movement. Though caricatured by their critics for an excess of abstract reason detached from observable reality and for a love of logical deduction over experimentation, Descartes and his followers of course maintained a more nuanced, and at times respectful, attitude toward the collective enterprise of establishing empirical evidence. In any case, Fontenelle himself certainly careens in his writings from a millennial view of human transformation through the new rationalist method, to a more consensual conception of the gradual accumulation of knowledge.

Fontenelle's careening is indicative of a larger set of ambivalences that characterize the Modern partisan. Though a ruthless critic of "the idiocies of antiquity," he could also be a flinty skeptic concerning the superiority of his own times, and an admirer, if a discreet one, of the classics. Indeed, he occasionally allies himself with ancient pagan philosophers in his attacks on modern Christian superstitions; he creates most of his literary work by adapting Greek or Latin sources (such as the *Nouveaux Dialogues* from Lucian, or the mythological subjects he tackles as an opera librettist—though in all cases with his trademark irreverence); and he admits that there is something, in the final analysis, irreducible in primitive talent and invention, even if it produces only the raw materials that so desperately need modern refinement.²²

Fontenelle and his Modern allies, however, are not alone in this careening. Ancient apologists shift paradigms as quickly. And like the Moderns, they do so not just for polemical utility, but also due to some inner conflicts. We have already seen how the Ancients can embrace the paradigm of cumulative progress, even while radically critiquing it in certain regards. It is less obvious how a belief in the Cartesian revolution can benefit their cause. And yet the Ancient apologists were people of their time, and the Cartesian influence in France (challenged though it be by multiple forces), extends its "reign," as Fontenelle might say, throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, before being overthrown by the importation of English empiricism in the early eighteenth century.²³ Thus one finds Boileau surprisingly eager to celebrate the revolutionary rationalism that divorces modern France from the ancient past. We have already seen the disdain in which he held the neo-Aristotelian conservatism of the universities. If Boileau could reportedly lament, for example, that Descartes's dry method "had cut the throat of poetry," he would, in contrast, never claim

that the philosopher had done anything but the greater good to mathematics or physics.²⁴

But the complexities are deeper, for even in the realm of poetry Boileau could be something of a Modern like Fontenelle, celebrating the rigorous path of reason.²⁵ And this tendency toward rationalism led Boileau to draw some historical timelines remarkably similar to those drawn by the Moderns. If Fontenelle's cry can be summed up as "At last came Descartes," Boileau himself celebrated another revolutionary genius who brought order, reason, and clarity to poetry, when he wrote his famous line "At last came Malherbe" ("Enfin Malherbe vint"; *Art poétique* I, in *OC* 160). It is no coincidence that the poet in question, Malherbe, is a figure of the early century, who, though a bit earlier than Descartes, also cleared away the unmethodical mess of past ages and became "the first in France" to impose strict "rules" of reason in his domain, in this case, poetic composition. Furthermore, Boileau's Malherbian revolution spontaneously erupts, apparently fueled more by independent reasoning than by imitation of past examples. Indeed, Boileau links fidelity to ancient models not to his hero Malherbe but to earlier Renaissance imitators of Greek and Latin, such as Ronsard, whom Boileau (much like his Modern adversary Perrault) lambastes for their "pedantic" borrowings from a dead language.²⁶ Of course, it would be a mistake to oversimplify Boileau's position here. For all his modern distaste for medieval darkness and Renaissance pedantry, Boileau found the same qualities of clarity and order that he associates with Malherbe not just in the modern poet, but also in the best of the ancients. Nevertheless, in Boileau's praise of Malherbe, the aid of the classics seems at best incidental to his achievement, and in this Boileau seems to share his opponents' vision of autonomous modern advances. Boileau suggests that Malherbe "found" his secret, as Fontenelle would say, "where the ancients found it": in reason alone. The lesson seems clear. Far from being the diehard party of the fading Renaissance, far from being the last believers in a rebirth based on study of Greek and Latin classics, the champions of antiquity could, when needed, take considerable distance from their humanist predecessors, and happily place themselves in a new world where reason trumps authority.

Boileau's Malherbian declaration, then, betrays something of the secret "Modern" lurking deep inside the Ancient apologist. But such passages represent only one aspect of Boileau's complex character and, I would argue, the least original aspect. That bold originality is to be found in the more radically "Ancient" side of Boileau, one that rejects his inner "Modern" and that dares turn the whole paradigm of progress on its head: yes, the modern epoch may have perfected the "method of reasoning," but this

rational exactitude can, at best, merely supplement the essential source of creativity: the untamed artistic inspiration, or poetic furor, that thrives in less advanced cultures.²⁷ And if he does not always say it, then it may be that, torn between his rationalist and antirationalist tendencies, he perhaps does not always fully believe it.

Such hesitations, or timidity, have helped to erroneously fix Boileau in countless literary histories as a champion of the kind of rationalist neo-classical poetics that were more fervently embraced by his opponents in the Modern party. Indeed, a century later, when, at the end of the eighteenth century the victory of the Ancients in aesthetic matters was largely assured, the poet André Chénier could complain that Boileau, though admirable in his defense of the sublimity of Homer, was in fact too much of a Modern, and *not enough* of an Ancient: after all, had not Boileau encouraged poets to model their characters not on classical Greek heroes, but instead on the very modern Louis XIV?

Despréaux [Boileau] advised poets to model their heroes after Louis XIV [...]. This great poet, after having so finely and rightly ridiculed the heap of absurd novels that gave a French air and taste to ancient Rome, should not have given a piece of advice worthy of the authors of these pathetic writings.

Despréaux donne aux poètes le conseil de former tous leurs héros sur Louis XIV [...]. Ce grand poète, après s'être moqué si finement et si justement de ce tas de romans absurdes où l'on donnait l'air et l'esprit français à l'antique Italie, n'aurait pas dû conseiller une chose bien digne des auteurs de ces pitoyables écrits. (*OC* 663).

Chénier had a point, and, seen from a distance, the Ancient apologist is in reality quite a Modern. After all, in addition to the ambiguities of his aesthetics, Boileau was, as of 1677, a functionary whose duty, as historiographer of Louis XIV, was to proclaim the superiority of a modern monarch. And in his own literary output he showed little interest in strictly imitating the works of antiquity that he praised, basing instead his satires, epistles, and mock-epics almost exclusively on modern life.²⁸

It is a commonplace in literary history—one indeed that we have seen evoked by La Bruyère and Fontenelle—to say that the moderns of today will quickly become the ancients of tomorrow. Such is time's work. But Chénier's remark reminds us of perhaps a more interesting, and inverse, truth: today's "Ancients" (that is, defenders of the ancients) may tomorrow seem a bit too "Modern," too deeply tied to their own present moment and its codes and customs. According to Chénier's logic, Boileau

would only acquire the authentic force of an Ancient when his own century is invested through passing time with its own aura of antiquity. Of course, this paradox does not invalidate the original commonplace, for we have also seen (through Fontenelle's profound ambivalence, for example) that, as time marches forward, the Moderns of any given moment will also soon seem too Ancient for some future tastes, too tied to the old canonical traditions and authorities that hindered their best attempts to break with the past.

We would best conclude such speculation by affirming that there are Ancient and Modern positions to be found in writings, but no pure and simple Ancients and Moderns among actual writers. A harsher judgment might be that there are only failed Ancients and failed Moderns. The inescapable present fetters the first; the inescapable past, the second. It might be argued that the porosity of the borders separating the parties, as well as the often frustrating fluidity of the participants' positions, ultimately reinforces a caricature of the quarrel as an artificial construct, as an empty dispute that needlessly opposed those who, seen from a point in the future, appear to share a surprising amount of common ground. In response, I hope to have begun to show that, on the contrary, the troubled ambivalence of the participants, their vexing attraction to both poles of the debate, prove the immense power of each of the contending visions of history and literature at play. And that is perhaps the very definition of a veritable intellectual conflict, as opposed to a purely polemical "quarrel": a debate driven by compelling yet opposing ideas whose dialectical progress produces new historical and aesthetic paradigms.

3 * Splintered Paths of Progress

The Two Cultures

Both parties operated in a world in which modernity was opposed to antiquity, through the slow accumulation of knowledge across the centuries and also through the more radical rationalist revolution of their own age. However, this shared ground was as thin as it was broad. We have seen, after all, that the two models of historical change, complex in and of themselves, often diverged—and sometimes annulled each other. Furthermore, the two parties, Ancient and Modern, often gave very different values to such paradigms of time that resulted. Contending visions of historical evolution thus flourished. Which human endeavors were subject to the accumulation of knowledge, which to the rationalist rupture with past learning? At what rate or rhythm did varying domains progress—and might progress in the future? And what value should be assigned to such “progress”?¹

The most basic divergence in the pathway of progress, all agreed, concerns the distinction between the arts and the sciences. The growing perception of the gulf between these two domains, the distinct awareness of what we call the “two cultures,” is among the key legacies left by the quarrel.² Indeed, by the end of the conflict, the Modern partisan Terrasson was left bemoaning an intensely rancorous divide:

We see that those learned in different sorts of knowledge believe each other useless to society. Let them burn all the poets and all the historians, exclaims a physicist or a geometer, but let us keep all the books of geometry and physics! The sentiment is reciprocated by the poet and the historian, who use the same terms against the works of geometry and physics.

On voit des savants en différentes sortes de sciences qui se croient réciproquement inutiles à la société. Qu'on brûle tous les poètes, tous les historiens, dit tel physicien ou tel géomètre, mais qu'on garde les livres de géométrie et de physique. La sentence est rétorquée en mêmes termes contre les ouvrages de géométrie et de physique par le poète et par l'historien. (*Dissertation* 1:233)

The playing field between the disciplines is, of course, not entirely level. From the beginning of the quarrel, for example, Ancient partisans cede immediately the ground of the sciences to modernity. The arts and literature, on the other hand, seem considerably more resistant to this progress, and cling to their perceived origins. This crucial differentiation, which breaks with the more universalist and synthesizing approach of the Renaissance, was coming to the fore even in the mid-century as the quarrel was brewing. Pascal's 1651 preface to the *Traité du vide*, with its stark separation of scientific fields free of past authority from nonscientific ones still under its sway, is indicative of the trend.³ By 1675, the critic Le Bossu felt it necessary to begin his treatise on epic poetry, which featured an impassioned defense of Homer and Virgil, by distinguishing the arts and sciences:

The arts have this in common with the sciences: like them they are founded on reason, and one must in both be led forward by the lights that nature has given us. But the sciences do not leave those who take them up or cultivate them the choice of taking any other guide than these natural lights of reason; the arts, in contrast, depend in many things on the decisions and the genius of those who first invented them [...] Poetics is of this nature: whatever reason may dictate, it is impossible to deny that the creative invention of poets and the decisions that they fancied to make have given it its content and form. So it is necessary to seek the fundamentals of this art in the excellent works of the ancients.

Les arts ont cela de commun avec les sciences, qu'ils sont comme elles fondés sur la raison, et que l'on doit s'y laisser conduire par les lumières que la nature nous a données. Mais les sciences ne laissent point à ceux qui les trouvent ou qui les cultivent, la liberté de prendre d'autres guides que ces lumières naturelles; et les arts au contraire, dépendent en beaucoup de choses, du choix et du génie de ceux qui les ont inventés les premiers. [...] La poétique est de cette nature: quoi que la raison ait pu lui prescrire, on ne peut nier que l'invention des poètes, et le choix qu'il leur a plu de faire, ne lui aient donné sa matière et sa forme. C'est donc dans les excellents ouvrages des anciens qu'il faut chercher les fondements de cet art. (1–2)

Le Bossu's distinction makes some important claims for the autonomy of poetry and arts from the empire of pure reason, but he also leaves no doubt that in the sciences that empire is legitimate, and that the ancients are therein largely irrelevant. In short, the battle over the sciences appears to be won before the war begins; indeed, few (outside of the sclerotic isolation of the universities, much mocked by both parties) seem interested in fighting it.

It is no surprise, then, that Perrault repeatedly proclaims that advances in the physical sciences are "incontestable" in the eyes of all, including Ancient partisans. Yet if these advances are no longer subject to debate (and indeed they were not), why does Perrault devote such substantial attention to them, for apparently so little polemical payoff? In this regard, Perrault makes an interesting, if purely tactical, claim: the relative worth of the ancients and moderns may in fact not arise at all from the allegedly varying paces of progress that seem to differentiate the sciences from the arts. He goes so far as to suggest that the two may advance in near, though imperfect, tandem. If this is so, he argues, the difficulty lies simply in measuring the progress in literature and the arts, in discerning their more mysterious march. The distinction would accordingly lie not in the uniquely different evolution of the arts, but instead in our *misperceptions* of its pace. It is easy enough to see the advantages of modern physics or engineering, because their "secrets can be calculated and measured." In contrast, the secrets of eloquence and poetry are, well, just more *secret*. They depend on less easily quantifiable, less "visible" elements like "taste and fancy," and thus their advances offer little in the way of quickly measurable proof.⁴ However, Perrault hopes that demonstrating the enormous advances in the calculable domain of the sciences should, by analogy, help convince readers of those in the arts, where he argues, progress has also been enormous. The evidence of scientific progress would thus dispel the illusion of stationary, or even declining, arts.

The argument by analogy, though, appears too weak for Perrault to fully embrace. The divide between the two domains proves simply too manifest, if not to himself, then to his readers. In any case, in other passages Perrault allows considerable more nuance, and even stark divergences, to enter into his comparison of the arts and sciences. But it is Fontenelle, as so often, who does the hard work of elaborating a conceptual framework to explain the different historic trajectories of the arts and the sciences. After asserting in the *Digression* the natural human tendency toward progress, he makes this important distinction:

However, in order for the moderns to be able always to surpass the ancients, the domain in question must be of a kind that allows it. Eloquence

and poetry, in contrast to other areas, require only a rather limited number of concepts, and they depend principally on the vivacity of the imagination. Now humans can acquire in a few centuries such a small number of concepts, and vivacity of imagination does not need a long accumulation of experiments and observations, nor a great number of rules, to reach that perfection of which it is capable.

Cependant, afin que les modernes puissent toujours enchérir sur les anciens, il faut que les choses soient d'une espèce à le permettre. L'éloquence et la poésie ne demandent qu'un certain nombre de vues assez borné par rapport à d'autres arts, et elles dépendent principalement de la vivacité de l'imagination. Or les hommes peuvent avoir amassé en peu de siècles un petit nombre de vues; et la vivacité de l'imagination n'a pas besoin d'une longue suite d'expériences, ni d'une grande quantité de règles, pour avoir toute la perfection dont elle est capable. (*OC* 2:419)

The distinction here differs from that elaborated by Le Bossu, in that Fontenelle still sees the arts and poetry as subject to the laws of progress—though that progress is achieved, according to Fontenelle, much more rapidly in the arts than in the sciences. Still, Fontenelle's vision is strikingly similar to that adopted by his opponent in the Ancient camp, Longepierre, who also, we saw, defined the arts in opposition to the sciences by their differing level of dependence on the accumulation of acquired concepts and methodological precepts (Fontenelle's "vues" and "règles"). Fontenelle thus reveals certain shared ground with his Ancient opponents when he goes so far as to assert, following the logic above, that "the ancients attained perfection" in the literary realm.⁵ It is important to note that in a later hyperrationalist moment in his career, Fontenelle will withdraw this concession, and fully embrace the superiority of modern poetry grounded in a Cartesian model where philosophical method trumps imagination, even in the literary domain.⁶ At the outbreak of the quarrel, however, the young Fontenelle still grants the "imagination," and not just reason, its due. And the ancients naturally benefit.

The Rise and Fall of Literary Genres

Nevertheless, Fontenelle does not give ground entirely. First of all, his emphasis in the *Digression* is still on progress, be it a more limited, literary kind, which can be accomplished "in a few centuries," that is, within the span of "antiquity" from early Greece to imperial Rome. This means that Virgil still trumps Homer: the most "modern" among ancients, the Au-

gustan poet, still surpasses the most ancient among ancients. More importantly, Fontenelle, despite all previous concessions, backtracks a bit, and suggests that a *modern among moderns*, a poet of today, might still be able to surpass a modern among ancients, a Virgil.

As concerns poetry and eloquence, the Greeks yield superiority to the Latins [...] Cicero wins over Demosthenes, Virgil over Theocritus and over Homer. [...] The most beautiful versification is Virgil's; it might, though, have been better if he had a little more time to polish it. [...] However, I would not be a bit surprised if someone today surpassed Virgil in such areas as the orderly coherence of the poem in general, the way of arranging the plot and creating pleasant surprises, the nobility of the characters, and the variety of episodes. Our novels, which are poems in prose, have already suggested the possibility of doing so.

Sur la poésie et l'éloquence, les Grecs le cèdent aux Latins. [...] Cicéron l'emporte sur Démosthène, Virgile sur Théocrite et sur Homère. [...] La plus belle versification du monde est celle de Virgile; peut-être cependant n'eût-il pas été mauvais qu'il eût eu le loisir de la retoucher. [...] Pour ce qui est de l'ordonnance du poème en général, de la manière d'amener les événements, et d'y ménager des surprises agréables, de la noblesse de caractères, de la variété des incidents, je ne serai jamais fort étonné qu'on aille au-delà de Virgile; et nos romans, qui sont des poèmes en prose, nous en ont déjà fait voir la possibilité. (*OC* 2:422–23)

We now understand that the concession to Virgil's "perfection" (even if in need of a little "polishing"!) concerns versification alone. And for Fontenelle such a purely technical mastery of language hardly constitutes the highest aspiration of literature. Indeed, the Modern party is in many ways, as we will see, the party of prose as opposed to verse, and, consequently, the party of the romance and the novel as opposed to the epic. Where the Ancient party lauds the material beauty of verse, its orality and the density of its linguistic signs, the Moderns opt for the supposed clarity of prose, its efficiency in conveying meaning and in producing precisely those literary virtues that Fontenelle evokes above: economically and logically structured plots as well as morally exemplary characters. As for the more rudimentary pleasure of verse—that is, the one literary accomplishment of which the underdeveloped ancients were admittedly capable—Fontenelle's condescension is arch: "In Homer's time, it was a marvel if a man could subject his speech to meter and to long and short syllables, and still produce something that made sense" ("Du temps d'Homère, c'était une grande merveille qu'un homme pût assujettir son discours à des mesures,

à des syllabes longues et brèves, et faire en même temps quelque chose de raisonnable” ; 2:426).

What, according to Fontenelle, would allow a contemporary to surpass Virgil? Advances in poetic principles and rules, certainly.⁷ But implicit in Fontenelle’s privileging of ordered structure and moral character is a championing of other, wider-ranging modern advances, both intellectual and social, that fundamentally condition literary creation. In terms of intellectual progress, we have already seen the universal impact of the new “methods of reasoning” pioneered by Descartes. As for social and moral progress, Fontenelle had begun to adumbrate those in the companion piece to the *Digression*, an essay on pastoral poetry where he lauded the softening and refinement of manners that define modernity. It is certainly this broader intellectual and social progress that propels modern romances and novels (he cites among others *La Princesse de Clèves*) to surpass ancient ones (*OC* 2:429), just as it nourishes the birth of new genres of literature, such as “gallant letters, tales and short stories, and operas,” whose sophistication and moral edification suit contemporary refinement.⁸

Perrault, interestingly, lists a nearly identical catalogue of newly minted modern genres, “unknown to antiquity.”⁹ And despite his preliminary remarks in the *Parallèle* promoting the analogy of scientific and literary progress, Fontenelle’s ally holds a largely similar view of the varying rhythms of progress for different human endeavors.¹⁰ In particular, Perrault posits that Virgil seemingly represents a first moment of perfection of literature (again asserting progress from its rude Homeric origins), before modifying his position with the following nuanced reflection on alternate historical trajectories for literary forms:

The epic does not encompass all of poetry, and even supposing that the moderns are inferior to the ancients in this particular genre, they can still surpass them in all other forms—in the lyrical, the dramatic, the satiric and in some less elevated genres, as I hoped I have shown the moderns to have already done. And despite the concession I made concerning the superiority of Virgil and his *Aeneid*, I am still not saying that the moderns yield absolutely to the superiority of the ancients in epic poetry.

Le poème épique ne comprend pas toute la poésie, et supposé que les modernes fussent inférieurs aux anciens dans ce genre d’ouvrage, ils pourraient les surpasser dans tous les autres, comme dans le lyrique, dans le dramatique, dans le satyrique, et dans les autres espèces moins élevées, ainsi que j’espère faire voir qu’ils les ont surpassés effectivement; mais

malgré l'aveu que j'ai fait de la supériorité de Virgile et de son *Enéide*, je ne conviens pas que les modernes le cèdent absolument aux anciens en ce qui regarde le poème épique. (*Parallèle* 3:152)

Perrault's last line, with its glimmer of hope for the ambitions of contemporary epic, proves something of a desperate rearguard action. Despite his own attempts at Christian epic poetry—for example, a *Saint Paulin* betraying, in its appropriation of a Greco-Roman form, an “Ancient” tendency lurking inside the Modern partisan—Perrault understands that there is something historically conditioned in the epic, uniquely suited to antiquity, and that its moment has passed. Still, the new modern age has its own genres to develop, and Perrault will of course break ground in that effort himself with the creation of his famous *Fairy Tales* (*Contes*) in the years after the quarrel breaks out.

Finally, there is one area that strikes all the participants in the quarrel as even more historically conditioned than epic poetry, and that is rhetoric and oratory. It is important to remember here that the quarrel breaks out a good century before the contemporary use of the word “literature” begins to take hold, at a time in which the term “eloquence”—referring most broadly to the art of using language well—was wonderfully capacious.¹¹ So it is that Longepierre and Perrault, on opposite sides of the quarrel, devote roughly equal time to the category of “eloquence” and to that of “poetry.” But the age of eloquence is ending. By the second outbreak of the quarrel in 1711–17, the balance radically shifts to what we call creative literature: to the epic (and its inheritor, the novel) above all, but also to prolonged considerations of drama, opera, and lyric poetry. The relation to historical conditions is essential for understanding this shift. “Eloquence,” particularly in its more limited relation to public oratory, is perceived by the players in the quarrel to be linked most intimately to the political and social fabric of its creation. It is, after all, an art of persuasion: it addresses with unique immediacy its contemporary audience, and deals most forcefully with current reality. Eloquence is therefore assumed to flourish in those societies in which there are contentious issues to debate, freedom to debate them, and rewards for doing so well. That is to say that eloquence prospers in republican antiquity, not in monarchical modernity. As Fontenelle remarks, “eloquence was the path to every end in the republics of the Greeks and in that of Rome” (“L'éloquence menait à tout dans les républiques des Grecs, et dans celle des Romains”; *OC* 2:422). Given this nourishing environment of political freedom, it is only natural then that “eloquence advanced further among the ancients than poetry, and that

Demosthenes and Cicero are more perfect in their genre than Homer and Virgil in theirs” (“l’éloquence a été plus loin chez les anciens que la poésie, et [...] Démosthène et Cicéron sont plus parfaits en leur genre qu’Homère et Virgile dans le leur”; 2:421–22).¹²

Perrault is similarly compelled to concede defeat for the Moderns on this point, though he valiantly attempts to defend contemporary eloquence in the judicial and ecclesiastic domains. But in regard to political oratory, there seems no contesting the advantage of the ancient “free state of republics,” and the modern disadvantage of the “domination of emperors and kings, who have placed limits on all things, [and] also placed very tight ones on eloquence” (“domination des empereurs et des rois qui a mis des bornes à toutes choses, [et] en a mis aussi de très étroites à l’éloquence”; *Parallèle* 2:253). Perrault does not, however, admit total defeat in this regard. The very decline of political rhetoric is revelatory, in his mind, of a crucial modern advantage, though a fundamentally nonliterary one. Surely the domestic peace and justice brought by modern divine-right monarchs trump all the pleasures of raucous speechifying.¹³

Whatever the conflicting interpretations given to the decline, even irrelevance, of modern political rhetoric, the consensus on the existence of that decline shifts the debate away from “eloquence” and toward the literary and dramatic genres that will dominate the quarrel through the early French eighteenth century. But it will fade only temporarily. Before long, political speech will once again take center stage in comparisons between the ancient and modern. With the importation of the theme of “English liberty” and with the rise of radical Enlightenment political thought in the 1730s and beyond, ancient republican oratory assumes renewed relevance. We find it thriving in Voltaire’s evaluation of the quarrel in his dialogue “Les Anciens et les Modernes.” His spokesperson happily asserts that in dramatic literature the moderns may equal or surpass the ancients, only to then lament, with a note of bitterness, that the greater political freedom of the ancients will always give them the edge in eloquence: “It is easier [...] for us [moderns] to have our own Sophocles and Euripides than to have people like [Cicero], because we have theaters, but we cannot have the public platform of the Forum” (“Il nous est plus aisé [...] d’avoir des Sophocle et des Euripide que des personnages semblables à [Cicéron], parce que nous avons des théâtres, et que nous ne pouvons avoir de tribune aux harangues”; *Mélanges* 735). The politicized praise of ancient eloquence only intensifies in the writings of a republican like Rousseau, to finally crescendo with the French Revolution, with its Robespierres and Saint-Justs “masquerading,” as Chateaubriand or Marx charged, as ancient Greeks or Roman senators and tribunes.¹⁴

An Ancient Partisan's Picture of Progress

To return to the historicized trajectories of rhetoric and literature sketched by Fontenelle and Perrault, what does the Ancient party make of this vision of genres that flourish or fail according to intellectual, moral and political conditions? In short, they heartily embrace it. After all, their defense of antiquity rested upon its cultural specificities. We have already seen that this meant they were more than ready to dismiss as archaic the natural sciences of antiquity. But their self-sacrificing historical impartiality, and even their mercilessness toward the very ancients they defended, did not stop there. It extended to a conception of diverging trajectories that could be nearly identical to that adopted by their Modern opponents. In short, Ancient partisans openly accepted contemporary superiority not only in the sciences, but also in some nonscientific domains, and even in a few literary ones. I return here to Boileau's most nuanced survey of the issues involved in the quarrel, contained in the conciliatory letter he penned to Perrault and published in 1701, and which sealed (a temporary) truce between the parties.¹⁵ In addressing his opponent, Boileau affirms that, if reduced to a simple rivalry between two periods of history, the quarrel appears to have no clear winner; indeed, if winner there is, it may very well be, Boileau concedes, not antiquity but modern France:

You and I are not so far apart in our thinking as you think. [...] Your intention is to show that [...] the Age of Louis XIV [le Grand] is not only comparable but superior to all the most illustrious ages of antiquity and even to the Age of Augustus. You'll be quite surprised when I tell you that I am entirely of your opinion on this matter.

Nous ne sommes pas même vous et moi si éloignés d'opinion que vous pensez. [...] Votre dessein est de montrer que [...] le siècle de Louis le Grand est non seulement comparable, mais supérieur à tous les plus fameux siècles de l'Antiquité, et même au siècle d'Auguste. Vous allez donc être bien étonné, quand je vous dirai, que je suis sur cela entièrement de votre avis. (OC 571)

Boileau then devotes several pages to a nuanced catalogue of comparisons, covering a wide gamut of fields, between Augustan Rome and seventeenth-century France. As for the sciences, the defender of the Ancients not only concedes immense progress since antiquity; he emphatically proclaims himself delighted to join the Modern party's self-congratulation on this particular point, and to "triumph with Perrault" over the defeated ancients (572). He likewise agrees upon contemporary superiority in philosophy, el-

evating far above the Romans both Descartes and Gassendi (and, given the Ancient party's reservations concerning abstract rationalism, the mention here of Gassendi, Descartes's empiricist and skeptical rival, is revelatory). As concerns literary genres, modern France proves, of course, inferior in epic poetry and in oratory. In the genre of tragedy, however, "we are superior to the Romans," affirms Boileau, before trashing—with a disdain that would delight the most ardent of Modern partisans—the "pompous" plays attributed to Seneca (572). Furthermore, Boileau recognizes, like his Modern opponents, the creation of new modern genres, such as the romance and the novel, unknown to antiquity and whose masterpieces "cannot be too greatly esteemed" (despite the reservations he emits about their moral character).¹⁶ As for the visual arts, although too little Roman painting has survived to allow definitive judgment, Boileau finds every reason to believe that modern French painting is superior. And finally, in the political domain, Boileau is ready to entertain French advances over imperial Rome, affirming by understatement that the moderns are by no means deficient in this area, and that "the Roman Augustus would not triumph over the French Augustus [i.e., Louis XIV]" ("l'Auguste des Latins ne l'emporte pas sur l'Auguste des Français"; 573).

The paradigm here of diverging paths of progress is even more nuanced and graduated than appears from the parallel of the "two" Augustan Ages, one ancient, the other modern. For Boileau shrewdly reminds the reader at various points that he is delimiting his parallel to one between modern France and Augustan Rome *alone*. This last epoch, however, hardly encompasses the variety of historical moments of antiquity, each with its particular cultural achievements. When, for example, he asserts the superiority of modern French comedy to that of the age of Augustus, he wryly notes that the Roman emperor reigned well *after* the apogee of Latin comedy, for under Augustus "there was not a single comic playwright whose name is worth remembering: the Plautuses, Ceciliuses and Terences were dead a century before." ("ils n'en ont pas eu un seul dont le nom ait mérité qu'on s'en souvint; les Plaute, les Cecilius et les Térence, étant morts dans le siècle précédent"; 572). In typical Ancient party style, the praise here goes not to the Augustan but to the pre-Augustan, not to the dull imitator but to the long-dead inventor.

Here lies the secret of Boileau's parallel. It may operate on a comparison of two highly civilized (thus essentially "modern") periods, those of the "Roman Augustus" and of the "French Augustus"; but it does so by explicitly contrasting these two with earlier, more creative, and more ancient periods. Hence the regressive detour by way of Plautus and Terence. But Boileau does not stop at this evocation of an earlier, more raucous Rome. The truly powerful, if repressed, oppositional figure to the Rome/France

couple must once again make its appearance: ancient Greece. So when Boileau turns to the visual arts, he deprecatingly notes that the only successful artists in ancient Rome were imported from the Hellenized east, “the Greeks of Europe and Asia, who came to Rome to practice the arts that the Romans, so to speak, did not know” (“les Grecs d’Europe et d’Asie, qui venaient pratiquer chez les Latins des arts que les Latins, pour ainsi dire, ne connaissaient point”; 573). Once again, the Ancient apologist points to the fractures dividing the Greco-Roman past and, in so doing, privileges Greece at Rome’s expense. Indeed, the whole exercise seems to subvert the notion of a “parallel” as practiced by Perrault, to undermine any binary opposition of antiquity and modernity. The first term is too complex to be commensurate with the second. Remembering that the modernity in question is that of one century (the seventeenth) and one country (France), how could it be compared to more than a millennium of pagan antiquity, from Homer to Plutarch and Tacitus and beyond, and a reach of three continents (Asia, Europe, and Africa)?

Boileau thus situates his Rome in a complex flow of history, comprising multiple streams and currents. In some arenas the Age of Augustus reached a high point, in others it came too late, and in yet others the future of French modernity would surpass it. Boileau concludes that he, just like Perrault, can assert the triumph of modern France in certain areas, but with a very different view of what time brings to the whole equation and of what value to grant different moments in its sweep. He addresses Perrault thus:

You see that we do not have a different opinion concerning the esteem that our own nation and our own century merit; but that we are differently of the same opinion. It is thus not your positions that I have attacked in your *Parallèle*, but the haughty and scornful manner in which your Abbé and Chevalier treat writers for whom, even while criticizing them, one cannot, I believe, have too much esteem, respect, and admiration.

Vous voyez, Monsieur, qu’à proprement parler, nous ne sommes point d’avis différent sur l’estime qu’on doit faire de notre nation et de notre siècle: mais que nous sommes différemment de même avis. Aussi n’est-ce point votre sentiment que j’ai attaqué dans vos *Parallèles*, mais la manière hautaine et méprisante dont votre Abbé et votre Chevalier y traitent des écrivains, pour qui, même en les blâmant, on ne saurait, à mon avis, marquer trop d’estime, de respect, et d’admiration. (573)

For Boileau, it is not so much the historical periods that are in question, but the attitude with which one regards them. The diversity of cultural

moments creates an equal variety of achievements, each “age” (worthy of the name) producing its own triumphs. There are of course disagreements over those achievements. But the most important, Boileau asserts, is the disagreement over our historical perspective. It is the *manner* of viewing the past, rather than the *matter* of the past, that divides the parties. And here Boileau promotes two different, even somewhat opposed, manners of judging the past, two attitudes to adopt before history. The first is an attitude of fairness, of “esteem” and “respect” for the otherness of the past. Implicit here is a denunciation of what he considers to be the vain self-regard of the Modern party, their condescension, their “scorn,” for antiquity. Here Boileau joins Longepierre and La Bruyère in the Ancient party’s appeal for a sense of “equity” in the dispute. And while he echoes some of the more judicial arguments in favor of impartial justice, his terms also resonate with those used for the kind of courteous deferral necessary for effective sociable exchange. It is, after all, precisely “esteem” and “respect” that peers must render to each other in the supposedly egalitarian (if restricted) domain of polite conversation. Boileau’s “respect” is thus not the kind that cuts off discussion—or eliminates, as he says, fair criticism—but instead one that allows it to proceed on open and equitable grounds, without pride or prejudice.¹⁷

Yet it is difficult to reconcile these arguments in favor of equity and reciprocity with the third term used by Boileau to qualify the stance of the proper reader of the ancients: “admiration.” This surely seems to suggest some unequal relation between the admirer and the admired, some elevation of the ancients beyond the level playing field of historical time. It is here that we get an inkling of the inherently affective and nonrational stance that the Ancient party takes toward the pagan past. But for the moment, it is important to remark that the term “admiration” as used by Boileau is to be taken in the prevailing seventeenth-century sense as a kind of awe or marvel before the extraordinary, and not as a tidy approval, let alone a veneration, of the good or exemplary. In this sense of the word, one does not necessarily want to “imitate” what one “admires.” One may even admire, as Corneille remarked of one of his more hideous villains, what one abhors: a certain wondrous grandeur in evil itself.¹⁸ In such cases, admiration is to be experienced as intellectually and morally jarring, even distancing—yet always emotionally overpowering and consuming. That is certainly the way Homer’s brutal world is spoken of by Ancient partisans indebted to Boileau, from Longepierre to Jean Boivin and Alexander Pope. Boileau’s admiration is thus far from uncritical approbation. Rather than a call for thoughtless or reflexive submission, it is instead an appeal for an experiential and emotionally charged response to the works of the past.

4 * Antiquity without Authority

Puerile Ancients and Mature Moderns?

Both of Boileau's attitudes toward antiquity, as contradictory as they may at times be, reaffirm his essential point regarding the foreign nature of the past: it is to be treated either (or alternately) as a respected interlocutor in a civil dialogue between distinct ages, or as something of an awe-inspiring creature from a distant land. In either case, Boileau is certainly not appealing to a sense of unbroken continuity with that past, and much less to any claim that such a past might stake to its authority over the present. Indeed, Boileau is quite careful not to apply the word "authority" to antiquity, nor to require from modern readers an unquestioned "submission" to past masters. His polemical heirs followed suit.

In fact, the question of authority is little more than a red herring in the quarrel. We have seen that Ancient partisans did not hinge their arguments upon the immediate relevance of living Greco-Roman tradition. So it was only logical that they avoided any appeal to the authority of that same illusive tradition. Unfortunately, the caricature of Ancient apologists as desperately clinging, in their fear of "revolutionary" changes, to the "tyranny of the classics" has remained a commonplace of the historiography of the quarrel.¹ Turn, for example, to the section on the quarrel in Harvard's *New History of French Literature*, and one learns that the "uncritical" Ancients represented "humanism with an authoritarian face" as opposed to the "libertarian" Moderns (Hollier 365); read the entry in the *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, and one is likewise informed that "an increasingly authoritarian royal power [...] invokes the authority of the Ancients in order to control a potentially disturbing" modern literature (Cave, 423).²

There is nothing particularly surprising about such commentaries. What, after all, could be more natural than to associate the ancient, the old, with a “normative” force wielded by the powers-that-be and challenged by a forward-looking new generation? It was certainly an association that the Modern party sought to exploit to its own advantage. In fact, the unattractive image of the authoritarian Ancient party is little more than a polemical distortion carefully crafted by its contemporary adversaries. From the opening lines of the quarrel, the first verses of the 1687 *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*, Perrault attempts to define, and defame, his opponents as the champions of blind and pedantic submission to the past.

Beautiful antiquity was always venerable,
But I never believed it was adorable.
I see the Ancients without bending a knee,
They are great, yes, but men just as are we.

La belle Antiquité fut toujours vénérable,
Mais je ne crus jamais qu'elle fût adorable.
Je vois les Anciens sans ployer les genoux,
Ils sont grands, il est vrai, mais hommes comme nous. (*Siècle* 257)

Perrault understands that the easiest way to mobilize public opinion against an irrational attachment to antiquity is to caricature it as a kind of humiliating genuflection before an antiquated past. It is a clever strategy, but one with clear limits. Perrault knows that the real motivation of the Ancient apologist (and the real threat to his rationalist project) lies in the other kind of nonrational approach that Boileau suggested: not the bowing down before an uncontested master, but instead the passionate, if sometimes perverse, “admiration” for a past invested with more wondrous remoteness than doctrinal authority.

As for that remoteness, we have already observed the indelible association of antiquity with faraway origins, be they viewed as powerfully creative or risibly crude. There is yet another aspect of this association to consider, one that proves fatal for any assertion of ancient authority. In a crucial development that helped sow the seeds for the future quarrel, the first half of the seventeenth century witnessed a radical reversal of the traditional analogy between the lifespan of collective humanity and the lifespan of the individual. This analogy, based on the mutual veneration due to both antiquity and wise old age (and likewise to both individual ancients and living “elders”), was turned on its head. If, the skeptics asked, we follow the analogy between the evolution of civilizations and that of an individual, does

not youth precede adulthood? Are not the first steps of knowledge those of feeble infancy? Is not antiquity then commensurate with childhood?

Thus antiquity was, in a single gesture, robbed of venerability and robed in puerility. True authority was now to be wielded only when mankind arrives at its “majority” in modern times, with its acquisition of vast knowledge and the maturity of its independent reason. That commonplace of the Enlightenment, most famously elaborated by Kant in the opening of his “What is Enlightenment?” had its origins much earlier. At the fore was Francis Bacon, who wrote in his 1620 *New Organon*:

But for antiquity, the opinion which men cherish of it is quite careless, and barely suits the meaning of the word. For true antiquity should mean the oldness and great age of the world, which should be attributed to our times, not to a younger period of the world such as the time of the ancients. True, that age is ancient and older in relation to us, but with respect to the world itself, it was new and younger. [...] Our age is the older age of the world, enriched and stocked with countless experiences and observations. (68–69)

The concept of antiquity as infancy spread quickly, and was naturally embraced in France not only by a rationalist like Descartes, but even by one often associated with certain antimodern and antirationalist attitudes, Pascal.³ This infantilization of the past presented a seemingly powerful arm in the Moderns’ arsenal. As noted earlier, Fontenelle had employed the argument as the quarrel brewed in his 1683 *Nouveaux dialogues des morts*, where Socrates, embracing the idea of human progress, remarks “that the world should have an old age wiser and more orderly than was its youth” (“que le monde devrait avoir une vieillesse plus sage et plus réglée que n’a été sa jeunesse”; *OC* 1:84). And Perrault employs it repeatedly: “Should not our first fathers be considered the infants, and we the elders and true ancients of the world?” (“Nos premiers pères ne doivent-ils pas être regardés comme les enfants et nous comme les vieillards et les véritables anciens du monde?”; *Parallèle* 1:50). There is no doubt that for Perrault the full force of maturity rests in the present moment. The moderns are the true ancients, and if ancientness is invested with authority, then authority logically lies with moderns:

Thus, since our century comes after all other centuries, and is consequentially the most ancient of all, and since eighty years of peace in France [...] have given it that maturity and perfection which I’ve just shown that it has achieved, why be surprised if one prefers it to all other ages?

Ainsi comme notre siècle est postérieur à tous les autres, et par conséquent le plus ancien de tous, que quatre-vingts ans de repos dans la France [...] lui ont donné cette maturité et cette perfection où je viens de faire voir qu'il est parvenu, pourquoi s'étonner si on le préfère à tous les autres siècles? (*Parallèle*, 1:59–60)

Indeed, Perrault seems to consider the puerility of the ancients perhaps the most powerful arm in his arsenal: it is the last that he deploys in the *Parallèle*, whose final volume ends with a sardonic characterization of Greco-Roman achievements as “the feeble first attempts of the infancy of the world” (“faibles essais de l'enfance du monde”; 4:294).

Fontenelle, an even more fervent apostle of progress than Perrault, goes further in elaborating a more optimistic version of the schema. While Perrault generally sees the present age as a “mature” and “perfect” one, and thus at times fears that it may be approaching a certain decline or decadence as it passes its zenith, Fontenelle argues that collective human civilization, unlike an individual human being, will never know old age but, instead, happily progress *ad infinitum*:

The comparison to be made between men through the ages and an individual man can be applied to the entire question of the ancients and moderns. [...] It is, though, too bad that we cannot take to its logical conclusion a comparison that was working so well, but I must admit that this [figuratively collective] man will have no old age; he will always be capable of doing those things that were proper to his early youth, but he will also be ever more and more capable of doing those things which suit the age of manhood. That is to say, to abandon our allegorizing, that humanity in general will never degenerate, and that the salutary ideas of all good minds that succeed each other through time will continue to accumulate one after another.

La comparaison que nous avons de [*sic*] faire des hommes de tous les siècles à un seul homme, peut s'étendre sur toute notre question des anciens et des modernes. [...] Il est fâcheux de ne pouvoir pas pousser jusqu'au bout une comparaison qui est en si bon train: mais je suis obligé d'avouer que cet homme-là n'aura point de vieillesse; il sera toujours également capable des choses auxquelles sa jeunesse était propre, et il le sera toujours de plus en plus de celles qui conviennent à l'âge de virilité; c'est-à-dire, pour quitter l'allégorie, que les hommes ne dégénéreront jamais, et que les vues saines de tous les bons esprits qui se succéderont, s'ajouteront toujours les unes aux autres. (*Digression*, in *OC* 2:425–26)

Fontenelle therefore concludes that the future will likely surpass the present as human reason inevitably continues to “perfect itself” (2:430). Antiquity, for Fontenelle, was indeed the foolish childhood of humanity; however, unlike this limited beginning, humanity’s future maturity is endless; and its senility, seemingly impossible.⁴

What is the response of Ancient apologists to the new paradigm of antiquity as the “infancy of the world”? Once again, they appropriate it for their own ends. If the Ancient party no longer has recourse to filial veneration for one’s elders, they can now lay claim to the inverse relation: the parental love of moderns for their beloved children, the ancients. They can also exploit a certain language of nostalgia for lost childhood. More crucially, it leaves open a whole new terrain for defenders of ancient culture: the celebration of the creative expansiveness and freedom of childhood, a period lacking in intellectual maturity perhaps, but all the richer in imaginative play. This last argument, however, though implicit in certain arguments made by the Ancient party, will have to wait until the mid-eighteenth century before it is fully appropriated for the cause.

Freedom of Debate: A License to Quarrel

These arguments in favor of childhood have a tremendous impact on the aesthetic dimensions of the debate, to which I will turn later. But they also contribute to the serious diminishment of “authority” as an issue in the quarrel. Of course, I am not arguing that the seventeenth century as a whole was dominated by an antiauthoritarian streak. Authority could still defend itself quite well in certain domains. Three of those domains have a particular pertinence to the issues debated, and merit attention here: religion, education, and political power. In all three, the question of authority sometimes entered the debate, but it did so in a strikingly limited fashion.

Religion played a particularly strong role in the lead-up to the quarrel, with Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin (to cite a figure keenly influential for Perrault) proclaiming in the early 1670s a kind of millenarian Christian superiority of modern France over the pagan past. In keeping with these roots, Perrault, and even Fontenelle, did not hesitate to engage in some rather crude pagan-baiting against the Ancient party.⁵ Nevertheless the quarrel was predominantly a secular affair. In general it concerned pagan poets, sculptors, and architects, not biblical patriarchs or church fathers. So it is that Perrault claims the basic freedom of debate in the areas under discussion. Not that Perrault embraces any freethinking heterodoxy. On the contrary. While Perrault mocks the alleged genuflecting of Ancient apologists

before the authority of the pagan Homer, he is ready, even eager, to submit fully to Christian faith and ecclesiastic hierarchy. The distinction between the secular (or pagan) and the sacred (or Christian) is key:

In regard to Holy Scripture, I have a sense of restraint, a respect, and a veneration that know no bounds. And no doubt because of that, I have less for ancient secular authors. The great submission in which I place my own mind for works inspired by God, all the care I take to make my mind renounce its own reasoning and place itself under the yoke of faith, means that I can then give it complete freedom to think of these great authors [of pagan antiquity] and to judge them as it pleases.

À l'égard des Livres sacrés, j'ai une retenue, un respect et une vénération qui n'ont point de bornes, et de là vient sans doute que j'en ai moins pour les anciens auteurs profanes. La grande soumission où je tiens mon esprit pour des ouvrages inspirés de Dieu, le soin que j'ai de le faire renoncer sans cesse à ses propres lumières et de le ranger sous le joug de la foi font que je lui donne ensuite toute liberté de penser et de juger ce qu'il lui plaît de ces grands auteurs [païens] (*Parallèle* 1:42).

Perrault states the obvious here. The church did not command obedience to Sophocles or Pindar. No one was burned at the stake, or imprisoned, for criticizing Homer. That does not mean, however, that the distinction between secular and sacred, between pagan and holy, was absolute. Indeed, at times there was a surprising intertwining of the fates of the two. Christian allegorizing of pagan mythology, for example, continued to thrive through the 1680s, even if the practice found itself increasingly marginalized.⁶ More crucial to the question at hand is the fact that the founding texts of these traditions, the epics of Homer and the Pentateuch of Moses, could also present some troubling parallels. When, for example, the proto-Modern literary critic d'Aubignac in the early 1670s penned a pamphlet (*Les conjectures académiques, ou Dissertation sur l'Iliade*) that audaciously denied the very existence of an author named Homer, he was certainly aware of the possibly troubling implications for another great ancient text, supposedly authored by Moses. He thus prudently insisted that he could present his thesis concerning the *Iliad* "without appearing ill disposed toward the crown, or of thinking ill of religion" ("sans se rendre suspect d'être mal affectionné à la couronne, ni de mal penser de la religion"; 6). But it was no doubt such fears concerning heretical thinking that, at least in part, kept him from publishing his treatise during his lifetime.

D'Aubignac's anxiety was not unfounded. After all, at roughly the same time in Holland, Spinoza, building on the foundation we have seen laid by

earlier humanist philologists, was elaborating a radical scientific philology to contest Moses's single authorship of the Pentateuch. The Modern party might be said to be following Spinoza's lead in attempting (if unsystematically) to apply to literary criticism of *secular* texts the critical, rationalist philology the Dutch philosopher brought to bear on the most *sacred* of texts, the Bible. As Spinoza phrased it, "the method of interpreting Scripture is no different from the method of interpreting Nature" (87).⁷ Banished here are all biased presuppositions, whether based on past exegetical authority, on contemporary prejudices, or simply on a general adoration for the text—the last being perhaps the most dangerous threat to critical reason, for it sees all sorts of philosophical, moral, and aesthetic perfections where there are none.

Perrault of course asserted, no doubt with fervent sincerity, that the Modern party had no intention of applying such critical zeal to "Holy Scripture." In his particular case, this reticence is no doubt due to his fundamental orthodoxy; indeed, his belief in modern superiority is often little more than a deeply conservative embrace of the status quo of Catholic France. On the other hand, in the case of his ally Fontenelle, there exists a barely concealed admiration for Spinoza's project of applying critical reason even to the sacred. But if Fontenelle is a bit of a Spinozist, he is an exceptionally prudent or even cowardly one. He aims his philosophical light beam only at the dark corners of pagan oracles and epic poets, and not at the equally shadowy recesses of biblical prophets and sacred texts. The Homer he attacks may be a stand-in for Moses, and the irrational follies he finds in the Greek epics and in their interpreters may be meant to surreptitiously gesture to holy writ and its exegesis, but you have to read very creatively between Fontenelle's lines to find the Hebrew prophet under the mask of the Greek poet.⁸ And even then you may not. In his fight against superstition, Fontenelle carefully pointed his philosophical arrows at the ancient pagan kind, not the modern Christian kind. If either party in the quarrel "bent their knees," as Perrault would say, to religious authority, it was hardly the Ancient party and more likely the Modern.



In contrast to the very real, if largely skirted, power of religious authority, the authority of scholarly and educational institutions and traditions was largely negligible. The quarrel is no university debate, but a conflict played out before a leisured literary class for whom the "authority" of Homer or Sophocles is a paltry, pedantic thing—a subject for scholars or schoolboys, but not for the cultural elite of Paris. Perrault is quite right to set his con-

versational debate of the *Parallèle* in the gardens of Versailles, for it is in such elegant sites, along with the salons, theaters, and armchairs of Paris, that the quarrel preoccupied minds. By the time of the second phase of the quarrel, the “querelle d’Homère” in the 1710s, the debate had moved into the new headquarters of free intellectual discussion, the cafés of Paris. Montesquieu, in a passage earlier cited, gives this satiric portrait of the conflict in his *Persian Letters*, one mouthed by the fictional Usbek reporting in 1715 on the day’s most fashionable topic:

Coffee is very popular in Paris; it is served in a large number of houses open to the public. In some of them people share the latest news; in others they play chess. [...] What shocks me most about these wits about town is that they do not make themselves useful to their country, but fritter away their talents on the most childish things. For example, when I arrived in Paris, I found them all heated up over the most trivial subject you can imagine; it was all about an old Greek poet, concerning whom, for over two thousand years, no one has even known his birthplace or the time of his death. [...] That was the quarrel! It was heated too, for they all cordially hurled such offensive insults at each other, and made such acerbic jokes, that I marveled as much at the manner of the dispute as at its matter.

Those of which I just spoke argued in the common tongue, and they must not be confused with a different sort of disputant, who uses a barbarous language that seems to add to the fury and stubbornness of the combatants. There are certain quarters where you see people of this kind like a thick black mob; they feed on subtle distinctions and live on argumentation and false conclusions.

Le café est très en usage à Paris: il y a un grand nombre de maisons publiques où on le distribue. Dans quelques-unes de ces maisons, on dit des nouvelles; dans d’autres, on joue aux échecs. [...] C]e qui me choque de ces beaux esprits, c’est qu’ils ne se rendent pas utiles à leur patrie, et qu’ils amusent leurs talents à des choses puériles. Par exemple, lorsque j’arrivai à Paris, je les trouvais échauffés sur une dispute la plus mince qu’il se puisse imaginer: il s’agissait de la réputation d’un vieux poète grec dont, depuis deux mille ans, on ignore la patrie, aussi bien que le temps de sa mort. [...] Voilà la querelle! Elle était bien vive: car on se disait cordialement, de part et d’autre, des injures si grossières, on faisait des plaisanteries si amères, que je n’admirais pas moins la manière de disputer que le sujet de la dispute. [...]

Ceux dont je viens de parler disputent en langue vulgaire, et il faut les distinguer d'une autre sorte de disputeurs, qui se servent d'une langue barbare qui semble ajouter quelque chose à la fureur et à l'opiniâtreté des combattants. Il y a des quartiers où l'on voit comme une mêlée noire et épaisse de ces sortes de gens; ils se nourrissent de distinctions; ils vivent de raisonnements et de fausses conséquences. (Letter 36, in *OC* 1:182–83)

The “old Greek poet” of unknown origin and time is, of course, Homer. The description reminds us of the mystery in which the remoteness of antiquity has, for a modern public, shrouded the poet. This is hardly a figure invested with the weight of authority. But more importantly, Montesquieu highlights here the social context of the debate. Far from the “barbarous” neo-Latin of the “black” clerical cloaks of the Latin Quarter and the theological argumentation of its university, the quarrel takes place in a coffee-house environment of worldly gossip and frivolous games. Its language is not only the “common tongue” of contemporary French, but, more precisely, a lively and conversational one of barbed wit and humor. It may be fundamentally “trivial” and “useless” for the political good, but then again its very frivolity makes it a popular subject for the non-scholarly leisured class at which it is aimed, and by which it is sometimes fought out.

Montesquieu's portrait goes a long way in dispelling any misconceptions that the Ancient party leaned on desiccated scholarly tradition, let alone the institutional weight of a discredited university establishment. (As for the less exalted realm of primary or secondary education, it is largely absent from the debate, and Perrault himself declares it irrelevant to a debate concerning the literary appreciation of adults.)⁹ Thus from the first rumblings of the quarrel in 1674—with Perrault's defense of opera, Racine's defense of Euripides, and Boileau's *Art Poétique* and translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*—all parties craft their arguments in the most elegant and contemporary French for a nonlearned public. Even the most learned of Ancient party philologists, such as Anne Dacier, were noted for an easy sociability and wit that served them well in the salons of the day.¹⁰ True, a number of important works of erudite philology were still written in Latin, as witnessed by Spinoza or, more crucial to the later English quarrel, Bentley. But such learned texts gained their place in the larger cultural debate through their dissemination in the vernacular essays and criticism of their allies and opponents. Furthermore such neo-Latin works, as in the two cases just cited, were more often aligned not with the defenders of the ancients, but with the Modern party, which was frequently attacked

as the more pedantic party.¹¹ In any case, the works of Racine and Boileau show that the Ancients, just as much as the Moderns, were a party of translation and adaptation into the current language and culture, indeed a party of the *popularization* of formerly inaccessible ancients—as with the little-known Longinus rendered by Boileau in seductively readable prose.

Longepierre typifies the liberal attitude of the Ancient apologists when he insists that his target audience is precisely the nonscholarly cultivated reader with little or no knowledge of the dead languages involved in the quarrel: “I have decided to write for those who, being incapable of judging the question by reading the texts in their original language, can only decide by reason alone” (“J’ai prétendu écrire pour ceux qui n’étant pas capables d’en juger par la lecture des originaux, n’en peuvent décider que par la raison”; 42). Likewise, Boileau repeatedly affirmed that his aim was to please the amateur readers of the day, proclaiming that he operated on the following principle: “a work that is not appreciated by the reading public is a very bad work” (“un ouvrage qui n’est point goûté du public, est un très méchant ouvrage”; *OC* 3).¹² He consistently mocked erudite experts and their pedantic neo-Latin, arguing that ancient poets owed their glory not to learned authorities, but instead to what Virginia Woolf might call the “common reader,” or what Boileau himself called “sensible and sensitive men throughout the centuries.”¹³ And he certainly was not foolish enough to think that this cultivated and leisured audience could ever be mistaken for cowering pupils who could be whipped into obeying ancient dictates.

Far from schoolchildren, the audience for the quarrel was one that had reached a self-conscious maturity, a kind of intellectual “majority,” in terms of confidence in its critical abilities. It is no surprise then that it became a commonplace for Ancient apologists to ostentatiously reject discredited appeals to creaky authorities, to loudly affirm that “the truth, and even plausibility, are to be always preferred to the most respectable authorities” (“la vérité, et même la vraisemblance, devaient toujours être préférées aux autorités les plus respectables”; Boivin, “avertissement,” in *Apologie* n.p.). The Ancients really had no choice. By the time the quarrel broke out, the reading public had reached a happy assurance concerning its own judgment through more than a half-century of other highly publicized literary polemics, or “querelles,” particularly those engaging the audiences of Paris theaters. And from the first such major quarrel, that of Corneille’s path-breaking *Le Cid* in 1637, playwrights argued for the recognition of a certain freedom of critical debate, and of the sound and sovereign judgment of the literary public—a recognition they partially won when Richelieu, at the end of the *Le Cid* controversy, abandoned his intentions of using the Académie Française as a tool for official, state-sponsored criticism.¹⁴ The

social milieu of the theater proved a perfect training ground for the non-professional public's entry into the world of open critical debate. Indeed, by the 1660s both Molière and his rivals penned plays that depicted audience members, including servants and merchants, engaging in unconstrained polemics about current theatrical productions. It is no surprise then that one of the first skirmishes (to which I will later return) of the brewing quarrel, the 1674 polemic pitting Racine against Perrault, arose over rival dramatic adaptations of Euripides publicly staged at the same time. Finally, the early eighteenth-century migration of the quarrel to the newly established cafés or coffeehouses, though mocked by Montesquieu, places the debate in one of the putative sites of the birth of a new public sphere, where the freedom from authority granted to literary and artistic discussion proved exemplary for other realms of debate.¹⁵



But was the quarrel truly so free from the repressive mechanisms of political power? Was not the ultimate authority, that of the absolutist regime, tempted to play its hand here? When the opening shot of the quarrel has a title like "The Age of Louis the Great," it is hard not to see the interest the crown might take in the affair. And interest it did take. But here is the rub: its interest could be found on both sides of the dispute. The Modern claims concerning the superiority of the absolutist state were certainly flattering, and quite useful for propaganda. Conversely, the prestige of ancient heroes and pagan mythology was also beneficial to the image makers of "Le Roi-Soleil," also known as "Le Nouvel Apollon." The regime therefore had conflicting interests and shifting loyalties. Louis's powerful key minister during the lead-up to the quarrel, Colbert, no doubt had some Modern leanings, and helped promote Perrault. By the time the quarrel broke out, however, the court was leaning more heavily toward the Ancient position.¹⁶

But direct intervention in the quarrel was not to be. This is not to say that the political implications of certain ancient literary texts were overlooked. Indeed, Perrault argued in his preface to the *Parallèle*, with astonishing directness, that the faithful translation of certain ancient texts, and their dissemination to a general public, was nothing less than "contrary to good politics" ("contre la bonne politique"). Yet his call for the censorship of classics—though not entirely without bite in an age of increasing state control of the press—was simply not heeded.¹⁷ The very texts he attacks here, Longepierre's faithful translations of some of the more uncouth episodes in Theocritus, were published with royal privileges, as were

Anne Dacier's enormously successful, and largely faithful, translations of Homer. Of course, there were still some self-imposed limits on discussion. If the debates around Helen's use of Egyptian opiates in book 4 of the *Odyssey* gave rise to muted discussions of drug use in antiquity,¹⁸ the subject of homosexuality remained, in contrast, largely forbidden. Thus the one passage in the *Parallèle* where Perrault timidly begins to denounce the ancient Greeks' "tenderness for young boys" comes to an abrupt self-censoring ellipsis in order to skirt the unspeakable.¹⁹

It appears in conclusion that if any party in the quarrel was likely to appeal to the constraints of authority, it was the Modern party. That is only natural for a movement that aligned itself with contemporary political and religious institutions, as well as with the time's predominant moral codes and social norms. As for the Ancient apologists, we have seen how little weight the prestige of the past actually carried with it in the age of rationalism and polite sociability. If the Ancients shifted their defense of pagan antiquity toward a self-proclaimed historical sensibility, and even a celebration of foreignness and remoteness from the present, then they did so, at least in part, because they had no choice. But we have yet to see just how shocking to the sensibilities of modern Paris and Versailles the foreign world of antiquity could be.

PART II * The Shock

5 * Why the Scandal?

The Difficulty of Detachment

When the ancient past, once so intimately bound to the present, becomes fundamentally alien, it can then, as with any such estrangement, arouse longing, repulsion, or cool indifference. The last option, however, has limited viability at a moment when the separation is so raw that it inevitably provokes passion. The time of the quarrel was such a moment. The Renaissance identification with an idealized antiquity (partly undermined though it was by the humanists' own critical investigations) could not yet be casually discarded. The attachment to the classical past was thus more likely to turn to sour distaste than to a dispassionate and rational evaluation. And so it did. Even a figure as sympathetic to the Ancient cause as Fénelon had to admit the inevitability of a gut reaction, here of indignation, to an antiquity whose culture had come to seem so unattractively foreign: "I cannot doubt that the religion and the manners of the Homeric heroes have great faults. *It is natural that the poet's depiction of these faults shocks us*" ("Je ne saurais douter que la religion et les mœurs des héros d'Homère n'eussent de grands défauts. Il est naturel que ces défauts nous choquent dans les peintures de ce poète").¹ The "shock" felt by an avowed admirer of Homer such as Fénelon proved even more "natural" for the Modern partisans who, for all their claims of detached rationalism, frequently reveled in their violent aversion to antiquity.

In the preceding pages I suggested that the Ancient party openly embraced an affective, even passionate, relation to the past. It is time now to consider the equally emotional (if diametrically opposed) Modern attitude to that same past. When consumed by repugnance toward the absurdities and barbarities of antiquity, the Moderns could quickly drop the collec-

tive voice of reason and abandon their cool appeals to the reader's impartiality. In its place erupted the starkly subjective, first-person cry of scandal: "*I have long been shocked* by this ancient manner," or "*I am offended* to hear Achilles call Agamemnon a drunkard" ("Il y a longtemps que je suis choqué de cette manière antique"; "*Je suis offensé* d'entendre Achille qui traite Agamemnon d'ivrogne"; italics mine). Such are the exclamations of Perrault's two Modern spokespersons in the *Parallèle*.² They decry ancient texts not only as personally shocking and offensive, but as simply "outrageous" ("outrageant"; 3:138). The antipathy is visceral. Virgil is "absolutely unbearable" (3:136); and as for Cicero, the Modern partisan barely has words to express dismay at his "dirty" and "disgusting" "filth."³ As "filth" suggests, there is for Perrault something essentially malodorous about antiquity. Its muck can best be discovered by the nose. So it is that the faults of one ancient poet "cannot help but to *make felt* some of its antiquity" ("ne laisse pas de se ressentir un peu de son antiquité"; 3:266; italics mine). The rot of ancientness is first "felt"—perceived through the primordial senses—and can be judiciously analyzed only after the shock recedes.

Such expressions of aversion led Ancient apologists to argue that the Moderns spoke not from reason but from blind self-love, from a collective *amour-propre* or preference for their own time and culture. Their opponents' irrational hostility was driven, the Ancients contended, by jealous fear that antiquity rivaled, and perhaps eclipsed, modernity. The Moderns appeared to be possessed by a deep-seated hatred that no rational argument could defeat: no matter what the evidence, as Longepierre phrased it, "this odious antiquity will always appear to them condemnable and full of faults" ("cette odieuse antiquité leur paraîtra toujours pleine de défauts et condamnable"; *Discours* 150).

The Moderns nevertheless strove, however intermittently and imperfectly, to rise above such emotional antipathy and instead to embrace cool objectivity. They consistently urged their readers to practice clear-eyed disinterestedness in judging antiquity, and proclaimed themselves to be the party of critical detachment. Ironically enough, though, the Moderns' unshakable confidence in impartial reason led to some rather giddy self-satisfaction. Perrault describes the supposed rationality of the quarrel, at least as waged by his side, in these terms: "I am persuaded that the praiseworthy freedom that we give ourselves today to reason upon all things that spring from reason is one of the things for which we have most cause to congratulate our century" ("Je suis persuadé que la liberté louable qu'on se donne aujourd'hui de raisonner sur tout ce qui est du ressort de la raison,

est une des choses dont il y a plus de sujet de féliciter notre siècle"; *Parallèle* 1:93–94). Perrault's claim to critical detachment regarding antiquity leads quickly to a rather uncritical attachment to modernity. When he happily "congratulates" his own century, the apparent self-complacency undermines the call for unbiased judgment.

The presupposition is that a free debate, driven by reason alone, will necessarily favor the Moderns. As one of Perrault's inheritors, the abbé Terrasson, phrases it a generation later during the *querelle d'Homère*:

The true testing ground of authors and of works is thus this spirit of examination and debate, in a word this philosophical approach [...] from which has been constructed a guiding principle, a general and consistent system, only in this very century. This is where Aristotle was wrecked after two thousand years, and where Homer will be wrecked after three thousand.

Le véritable creuset des auteurs et des ouvrages est donc cet esprit d'examen et de discussion, en un mot cette philosophie [...] dont on n'a fait un principe, un système constant et général, que dans ce siècle. C'est là qu'est venu échouer Aristote après deux mille ans, et qu'Homère va échouer après trois mille. (*Dissertation critique* xlix)

Terrasson, like his fellow Moderns, stakes a claim not only to reason but, more specifically, to a particular practice of reason, that is, to the "consistent and general system" of the rationalist method inherited from Descartes. That criterion, it was assumed, doomed all those before the Cartesian moment to certain defeat, even total wreckage. The "system" appears rigged against antiquity, and designed to speed the sails of modernity.

Two discernable, and somewhat contradictory, tendencies are thus at work in the Moderns' attack. The first we can call the cool Modern approach. It vaunts above all a rational approach to literature and the arts, and it aims to disarm the obfuscating charms of ancient irrationality while promoting the modern preference for methodical order and moral propriety. Cool modernism expresses itself in critical examination. The second is the hot Modern approach, one that may lay some claim to reasoned analysis, but that most often operates from a visceral distaste for the Ancient world. Hot modernism expresses itself in the language of shock. As Perrault's and Terrasson's above remarks show, the two tendencies are not always clearly distinct and, in fact, often intermingled: on the one hand, the supposed rational critique of ancient standards is often contaminated by an unreflecting attachment to contemporary tastes; on the other, the

scandalized denunciation of antiquity, though passionate in tone, often claims to have a basis in a cool-headed philosophical examination of human universals.

To assess the sometimes contradictory claims made by Modern partisans, it will be useful to return to the opening lines of the quarrel, the first verses of Perrault's 1687 *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*:

Beautiful antiquity was always venerable,
But I never believed it was adorable.
I see the ancients without bending my knee,
They are great, yes, but men just as are we [...]
If we were to lift the specious veil
Which prejudice puts before our eyes,
And, tired of applauding a thousand gross errors,
Were sometimes to use the lights of our reason,
We would see clearly, without temerity,
That one might not adore all antiquity.

La belle Antiquité fut toujours vénérable,
Mais je ne crus jamais qu'elle fût adorable.
Je vois les anciens sans ployer les genoux,
Ils sont grands, il est vrai, mais hommes comme nous [...]
Si nous voulions ôter le voile spécieux,
Que la prévention nous met devant les yeux,
Et lassés d'applaudir à mille erreurs grossières,
Nous servir quelquefois de nos propres lumières,
Nous verrions clairement que sans témérité
On peut n'adorer pas toute l'Antiquité. (*Siècle* 257)

The Modern cause is that of enlightenment: the prejudices and superstitions that have too long subjugated mankind will be vanquished by clear, critical reason. Perrault's denunciation of prejudice targets the two (somewhat contradictory) types of irrational passions adumbrated in the previous chapter. One is the infatuated "adoration" of an exotic past, the other the genuflection before ancient authority. Of these two impediments to critical reason, we have seen that the quarrel is primarily concerned with the first, with adoration, since the authority of antiquity was by 1687 fatally diminished, at least in its bearing to the literary tastes of the cultivated but nonscholarly audience of the quarrel.

It is thus natural that Perrault concentrates not on authority but on affection, not on fearful submission but on irrational attraction to antiquity. In doing so, he is responding at least in part to the Ancient party's accusa-

tion that the Moderns were primarily motivated by collective self-love and a visceral jealousy of antiquity. Perrault retorts that it is the Ancient party, not the Modern, whose reason is overwhelmed by passion: in this case not by love of the self but, quite the contrary, by love of the other, by love of the most *other* of others, the faraway Greek past. His opponents are, he claims in *Le siècle*, simply blinded by “this mad love that they all have for the ancient” (“ce fol amour qu’ils ont tous pour l’Antique”; *Siècle* 267). A year after *Le siècle*, Perrault uses the *Parallèle* to further denounce this “mad love,” this anticophilia—or, perhaps better put, anticomania.⁴ As its title indicates, the first dialogue of the manifesto tackles “the prejudice in favor of the ancients” (“De la prévention en faveur des anciens”). And here again, the prejudice in question is motivated not by the tyrannical authority of the past, but instead by a freely adopted, yet bizarrely unreasonable, adoration. “It is true that prejudice is no more cunning than is love when it comes to finding great beauties where there are often very few” (“Il est vrai que la prévention n’est pas moins ingénieuse que l’amour à trouver de grandes beautés où souvent il n’y en a guère”; *Parallèle* 4:15).

What, according to Perrault, is the cause of this “amour des Anciens,” this perverse “tendresse” (1:7–9)? Its root lies first in antiquity’s very distance from us, in the allure of the exotic: it is the symptom of an “overwhelming passion for all that is foreign and remote” (“passion démesurée pour tout ce qui est étranger et éloigné”; 1:7). The flattering haze of a distant horizon allows the imagination free reign to embellish and magnify. As Perrault’s ally Fontenelle already remarked a few years earlier, in matters of temporal, as opposed to spatial, distance, the rules of perspective are oddly reversed. The further in the historical background a figure is, the greater it appears, not the smaller: “Be careful of one thing. Antiquity is a very particular kind of thing, its distance from us augments its size” (“Prenez garde à une chose. L’Antiquité est un objet d’une espèce particulière, l’éloignement le grossit”; *OC* 1:85). For Perrault, the fog of the past creates an obscurity that only further excites the lover of the ancients. We have already encountered his thoughts on this subject: when peering back into antiquity “one finds everything about it admirable, and *even all the more admirable in that one does not understand it*” (*Parallèle* 1:13). The passing of historical time is the passing of an eraser; it leaves only faded and often unintelligible traces. But these traces are all the more dangerously seductive to our imagination for their mysterious suggestiveness.⁵ From faded portraits we create phantom lovers. Perrault, of course, prefers the living flesh of today.

And Perrault’s preference is often as passionate as the one imputed to the opposing camp. Indeed, to return to the first lines of *Le siècle*, his

rhetoric careens from one emotional response to the other: first he concedes that there is subject for “admiring” the ancients, then he finds subject for the opposite (but equally instinctual) reaction, for a kind of dislike, even disgust, for their otherness. In *Le siècle* (unlike the more brass-knuckled *Parallèle* to follow) this distaste is lightly veiled in understated or ironic terms. Consider, for example, a few lines on Homer that reveal the attachments, and perhaps even “prejudices,” that flavor Perrault’s thinking. He addresses the author of the *Iliad* thus:

But if the Heavens, so favorable to France,
Had delayed your birth until our own age,
Then a hundred faults imputed to your own time
Would no longer profane your exquisite works. [...]
Your verve would have created those valiant half-gods
Less brutal, less cruel, and less capricious.

Cependant si le Ciel favorable à la France,
Au siècle où nous vivons eût remis ta naissance,
Cent défauts qu’on impute au siècle où tu naquis,
Ne profaneraient pas tes ouvrages exquis. [...]
Ta verve aurait formé ces vaillants demi-dieux,
Moins brutaux, moins cruels, et moins capricieux. (*Siècle* 260–61)

It is hard to reconcile the rationalist in Perrault, who pleads that “nature” is constant through time and that one must judge history objectively, with the passionate panegyrist, not only of Louis XIV, but also of his entire historic moment. It now appears that the “Heavens” (“Ciel”), far from obeying a Cartesian mechanical consistency, suddenly play favorites by arbitrarily shedding a special grace on modern France. Likewise, Perrault’s literary criticism here lurches toward the unscientific. The Homeric poems, far from being objectively considered for their structure, moral content and style, become here “exquisite” works produced less by reason and rules, than by some instinctual “verve.” Indeed, when Perrault asserts the work has been “profaned,” he seems to grant it the kind of cultlike sacred status that he so vehemently rejects elsewhere.

What is Perrault up to here? We can first attempt to dismiss these lines—so full of the old, impassioned language of literary adulation, and so lacking in the new, liberated critical detachment—as a simple flourish of pure polemical irony. Perrault mimics the Ancient party’s language of “adoration” in order to slyly turn the cult of the Greek epics against itself: if Homer was a god, then he blasphemed himself through his own errors. And Perrault may indeed be ironically parroting his opponents. Yet

that does not resolve the problem. As is so often the case, Perrault fails, or rather does not attempt, to demystify literary criticism, but instead simply replaces one nonrational judgment (“adoration”) with another (“profanation”). Nothing is more common in Perrault’s arsenal, we will see, than this recourse to emotionally charged language.

Arbitrary Customs versus Universal Codes

How do the Moderns attempt to reconcile their passions to reason, and to ground their aversion in logical demonstration? Perrault’s acid characterization of Homer’s heroes as “brutal,” “cruel” and “capricious” offers a useful vantage point from which to address the problem. Perrault repeatedly claimed that the shock provoked by such ancient vices was *not* an emotional response arising from an infatuation with current, and admittedly arbitrary, social conventions. No, the profoundest of scandals was instead, he argued, provoked by a love of timeless reason itself.

It is a crucial, though fragile, distinction. Perrault differentiates between two types of distaste that Homer triggers in modern readers: one, presumably of minor importance, arises from a shock to our ephemeral and culturally specific customs, this being an “arbitrary” response. The other—this one capital—arises from a shock to universal and immutable reason. “In regard to morals, there are some that particularly concern the time when [Homer] wrote, and others that concern all times” (“A l’égard des mœurs, il y en a de particulières au temps où il a écrit, et il y en a qui sont de tous les temps”; *Parallèle* 3:47). The distinction operates, according to Perrault, in the aesthetic as well as the moral realm. Thus he carefully separates forms of beauty that are recognized as such “by all tastes, all countries and all times” from “others that are only arbitrary, and please because our sight is accustomed to them.”⁶

The boundaries are however not so clearly drawn between the local and the universal. Perrault concedes, for example, that a certain rusticity in Homeric manners is simply a matter of historical vicissitudes. Impartial readers should not be shocked by the superficial rudeness or lowliness of Homeric heroes, by their cooking their own food (as with Achilles) or laundering their own clothes (as with Nausikaa; 3:47). But where exactly is the line drawn between arbitrary shock and reasonable indignation? Perrault is never clear on this point. He simply claims that the allowance granted to changing customs has its limits (“bornes” 3:55). For Perrault that limit is crossed, for example, when Odysseus attempts to disguise himself as a lowly beggar upon his return to Ithaca: “one cannot see without indignation and without disgust one of the heroes of the *Iliad* lie

down at night with pigs” (“on ne peut voir sans indignation et sans dégoût un des héros de l’*Iliade* se coucher le soir avec les pourceaux”; 3:55). What offense to universal reason is there in Odysseus’s slumbering with swine (which was, on the hero’s part, a quite rationally conceived strategy of disguise)? Why tolerate (if only grudgingly) princes in the kitchen but not in the pigpen? Perrault’s spokesperson, the Abbé, does not say. It appears then that it is instead the “arbitrary” sensibilities of the modern French that are disturbed here, and that Perrault simply conflates these tastes with universal dictates.

The confusion of categories is revelatory. Perrault’s equation of current tastes with timeless reason is, in fact, nothing less than a logical corollary of his notion of progress. The surefooted evolution of civilization has rendered contemporary norms fundamentally less arbitrary, and more rational. Modern readers’ disgust is thus justified by the very fact that they are modern: “Politeness and good taste, which have been perfected with time, have rendered unbearable an infinity of things which one suffered, even praised, in the works of the ancients” (“la politesse et le bon goût, qui se sont perfectionnés avec le temps, ont rendu insupportables une infinité de choses que l’on souffrait, et que l’on louait même dans les ouvrages des anciens”; 3:146). If the march of time has, as Perrault asserts, “perfected” manners, then the contemporary world provides the uncontested standard against which all is measured. Thus Terrasson can later claim, without feeling the need for further justification, that a scene from Sophocles “will always shock the sensible reader, not because it is against our particular manners or morality, but because it offends the general laws of morality” (“choquera toujours les lecteurs sensés, non parce qu’elle est contraire à nos mœurs particulières, mais parce qu’elle offense les lois générale [*sic*] des bonnes mœurs”; 1:195). Modernity lays implicit claim to universality.

The claim is not, however, always simply implicit. It is La Motte who perhaps best makes explicit what is tacit in these conflations of the modern and the timeless:

At the base of things, the greatest vice of Homer is thus to be born in a rude and ignorant age. [...] He depicted what he saw, and that is all he could do; but what he depicted has become *shocking*, not only by caprice and by a change in arbitrary ideas, but *by a real knowledge of what constitutes the true dignity of man*.

Le plus grand vice d’Homère dans le fond des choses est donc d’être né dans un siècle grossier. [...] Il a peint ce qu’il voyait, c’est tout ce qu’il pouvait faire; mais ce qu’il a peint est devenu *choquant*, non pas seulement

par caprice et par une révolution d'idées arbitraires, mais *par une connaissance réelle de ce qui fait la véritable dignité de l'homme*. (*Réflexions sur la critique*, in *Textes critiques* 358; italics mine)

La Motte does not deny here that “arbitrary” tastes may play a role in the shock felt by modern readers of the ancients. But he does seem to ally this fundamentally capricious distaste, at least when experienced by contemporary enlightened readers, with something much more solid: a “real knowledge” of morality firmly established by the advances of modern philosophy. So it is that when La Motte sets out in his abridged adaptation of the *Iliad* to “correct the most shocking parts” (“remédier au plus choquant”; *Textes critiques* 357), he slashes the merely indecorous along with the profoundly immoral, and pays equal homage to the “caprice” of his times and to what he argues to be “real knowledge” of universal human nature. In the eyes of the Modern apologist, the first is often indicative of the second. The norms of today reveal the truth of eternal reason.

The Shepherd's Slap

Modern claims to a coolly rational shock—one arising from an affront to objective standards—thus prove difficult to clearly divorce from an unreflecting prejudice in favor of present customs. No passage can better illuminate this complex reaction than the preface to the first volume of the *Parallèle*. At the end of this opening statement to his multivolume manifesto, Perrault attacks the indecency of the eclogues of Theocritus, which had just been translated into French by the Ancient apologist Longepierre, with what Perrault considers a scandalous fidelity to the Greek original.⁷ Perrault, having first incredulously described the barbarous rusticity typical of Theocritus's shepherds, seizes the occasion to express his outrage at the publication of a work so dangerous to public morals. As evidence, he cites a passage from Theocritus depicting a clear transgression of all civilized manners: a shepherd who slaps his mistress in a moment of lover's spite. Perrault is no doubt right to remark that there is nothing “gallant” in the shepherd's action. And, as we will see, Perrault's use of “gallant” as a measuring stick of civilization is crucial, for the gallant codes of deferential behavior and refined wit define for him the social and moral perfection of the age of Louis XIV.

The shepherd's slap thus exposes all the troubling barbarity of the ancient world. What is more—and this point is capital—the slap cannot be justified by any appeals to the kinds of historical relativism favored by the Ancient party. Here is Perrault's response to that argument: “It will be said

that those were the manners of those times. Well, they were depraved manners, and consequently that was a depraved age, very different from our own" ("on dira que c'étaient les mœurs de ce temps-là. Voilà de vilaines mœurs, et par conséquent un vilain siècle bien différent du nôtre").⁸ Perrault's "consequently" is revealing. "Our" age, the modern French one, is by nature "perfected," or at least very far from "depraved." This much, for Perrault, is axiomatic. We return here to the underlying ethnocentrism (or chronocentrism) of the argument, one that identifies contemporary French customs with reason itself. Perrault thus feels authorized to push the case against the ancient Greeks further here, arguing that their customs are repellant not only to modern France, but, more importantly, to reason and "Nature" itself. Greek customs are simply beyond the pale. They are not acceptable to any other civilization, not even, as earlier noted, to the most primitive: "I contend that such have never been the manners or morals of any country, not even of the Iroquois" ("je soutiens que ce n'a jamais été les mœurs d'aucune nation, non pas même des Iroquois").⁹ The cultural chasms between contemporary cultures, even between the most seemingly disparate, prove to be less disturbing than those between ancients and moderns; the "Iroquois" themselves cannot be compared in their supposed barbarity to "our own" infinitely more inhuman savages: Theocritus's shepherds of the European past.

In short, the depravity of the Greeks is unrivaled, indeed incommensurable. To argue for the relativity of customs is, for Perrault, pure impertinence. We are in the realm of absolutes, of the inadmissible. Witness the very last lines of the preface:

I do not understand how those at the head of the Ancient party allow such translations to be given to the public. [...] Prudence would have demanded that one keep hidden the *inexpressible beauties* of this author and that one not expose them to an age such as ours [...]. These translations of Greek poets go against the political good.

Je ne comprends pas comment ceux qui sont à la tête du parti des Anciens, souffrent qu'on donne au public de semblables traductions. [...] La prudence voulait qu'on tînt cachés *les agréments inexprimables* de cet auteur, et surtout qu'on ne les exposât pas à un siècle comme le nôtre [...]. Ces traductions de poètes grecs sont contre la bonne politique.

Perrault concludes with an ominously threatening jab at his opponents, a call to suppress the best instrument they have to promote ancient literature: faithful translations and adaptations of the classics, in all their disturbing authenticity.

How seriously can we take Perrault's threat of universal bowdlerization (he speaks here, after all, not just of Theocritus, but of all "Greek poets"), if not of outright censorship? We have seen that official state control of publishing plays a very minor role in the quarrel. But the call here for self-imposed constraints on public access to ancient texts, for a sort of self-censorship inside the Republic of Letters, is real. In order to understand Perrault's appeal to "la bonne politique," it would be useful first to plumb the caustic ambiguity of his phrasing, in particular the ironic use of this italicized expression in the original text: "*the inexpressible beauties*" ("*les agréments inexprimables*") of Theocritus. Perrault is here actually quoting, with mordant sarcasm, the very words that Longepierre employed, in the first page of his preface to the *Idylles*, to praise the indescribable charms of the Greek originals. What is Perrault's strategy? First of all, he is taking square aim at the poetic mystique of the ineffable. Against the Ancient party tendency to find, as Perrault says, ancient poetry "even all the more admirable in that one does not understand it," Perrault's caustic quotation of Longepierre suggests that the wondrously ineffable is nothing more than the crudely unintelligible. Yes, these beauties are *inexpressible*, because they are incomprehensible, and thus unexplainable. How can one, after all, paraphrase nonsense? It is a line of attack that we will see Perrault and his allies use repeatedly against the Ancient party's embrace of the nonrational sublime.

But that is not all. There is yet another way in which Perrault attempts here to undermine Theocritus's "inexpressible beauties," one that leads us closer to Perrault's call for (self-)censorship. Perrault plays on another sense of "inexpressible" here: not an incomprehensible line of verse that resists rational explanation but, rather, an unmentionable scandal that defies decent speech. Where the Ancient apologist perceives what is too ravishing to describe (the sublimity of the poem's form), Perrault uncovers what is too shocking to repeat (the scandal of the poem's content). When it comes to the shepherd's slap, the wondrously ineffable proves to be the shamefully unspeakable: it is that which, Perrault admonishes, one should "not expose [...] to an age such as ours." It is the slap that dare not speak its name.

Perrault's rhetoric here reveals a broader tendency suggested earlier: where the Ancient apologists evaluate poetic form, the Moderns turn to content. Where the Ancients vaunt aesthetic qualities, the Moderns denounce social vices. To reprise Anne Dacier's distinction, the Ancients base judgments on *la bonne poétique*, the Moderns base them on *la bonne politique*.¹⁰ Perrault leads a Modern party assault on the content of ancient literature based upon the power of exemplarity. In this sense, his approach

to literature follows that of Plato in the *Republic*, who would have Homer banished for the vicious examples set by his heroes. The paradigm here for the reception of literature is a simple one: the public naturally tends to imitate the actions, passions and beliefs of the characters represented on page or stage. This narrow conception of the mimetic relationship between the reader and the text, the spectator and the spectacle, experienced a notable success during the mid-seventeenth century, with a powerful attack on the morally insalubrious effects of theater led by religious rigorists.¹¹ Perrault adopts this perspective from his first attack on Ancient literature, in his 1674 polemics with Racine, where he denounces the vices of Euripides' heroes in *Alceste*; referring to the supposed desire of the play's hero, Admetus, to hasten his wife's suicide, he asks ironically: "Is this thing a good example?" ("Est-ce une chose d'un bel exemple?"; *Critique* 90). He acidly concedes that such cruelty may have been acceptable to the ancients, but that it "is certainly not in keeping" with the higher standards of the modern world.

Hence Perrault's call for a self-censoring "prudence" that would "keep hidden" the baleful influences of ancient literature on the public. But what exactly are these threats to Perrault's ideal modern society? What is "la bonne politique" that might be subverted by the insidious example of antiquity? While the conception of the political here certainly encompasses the organization of the state, it also extends to all realms contributing to the "the tranquillity and decency of social life."¹² For the purposes of our examination, it is possible to distinguish three interrelated realms in which ancient literature threatens the newfound perfection of modern civilization. The first is the political, properly speaking; the second, the religious and theological foundations of society; the third, the realm of morals and social practices. In each of these three domains, addressed respectively in the following chapters, the scandal of the ancients presents a continual menace to modernity.

6 * Modernity & Monarchy

Achilles' Offense

Perrault is far from the first to suggest that reading the ancients, or at least reading ancients that have not yet been cleaned up by the “prudence” of modern translators or editors, poses a grave threat to contemporary political order. Yet the seventeenth century’s political discomfort with antiquity has often been eclipsed in intellectual historiography by the more thunderous debates of the next century’s political “retour à l’Antique.” I earlier noted this return of repressed ancient republicanism in the debate over political oratory that stretched from the high Enlightenment through the Revolution and its wake. More broadly, the eighteenth century experienced an identification with ancient models (an identification Perrault already feared) as a form of revolt against modern monarchies. The rebellious idealization of ancient liberties was perhaps most famously captured by a page in the *Confessions* in which Rousseau credited his “indomptable” “esprit libre et républicain” to his early and enthusiastic reading of the classics: “ever contemplating Rome and Athens; living, so to speak, with their great men, [...] I believed myself Greek or Roman; I believed myself the character whose life I read” (“sans cesse occupé de Rome et d’Athènes, vivant, pour ainsi dire, avec leurs grands hommes, [...] je me croyais Grec ou Romain, je devenais le personnage dont je lisais la vie”; *OC* 4:9). Whether or not the French revolution was indeed inspired, as Chateaubriand claimed (followed by Constant and Marx), by thinkers “living more in Rome and Athens than in their own country, [who] sought to revive in Europe the ways of antiquity,” the power of the ancient countermodel to modern monarchy was certainly a hallmark of the generations that succeeded the quarrel.¹

But we need not look to the eighteenth century to understand Perrault's trepidations concerning the dangers of ancient political models. Indeed, the menace posed by Greek and Roman texts was perfectly formulated, a generation before Perrault, by Hobbes in his 1651 *Leviathan*:

And as to rebellion in particular against monarchy, one of the most frequent causes of it is the reading of the books of policies and histories of the ancient Greeks and Romans. [...] In sum, I cannot imagine how anything can be more prejudicial to a monarchy than the allowing of such books to be publicly read, without present applying such correctives of discreet masters as are fit to take away their venom. (II, chapter 29, 243–44).

While Hobbes is warning here of the dangers of Aristotle's or Cicero's political writings, and not of Theocritus's pastoral poetry, the similarities with Perrault's call for censorship are striking. And it is important to remember that Hobbes's reflections spring not only from the context of the English civil war, but also from the intellectual and political milieu of the land of his exile, France—a country that was in those years experiencing its own resistance to the dictates of modern monarchy, culminating in the aristocratic uprising of the “Fronde” (1648–53). In any case, both Hobbes and Perrault believe the interests of “good politics” and a stable “monarchy” require that the “prudence” or “discretion” of scholars, translators and editors should “keep hidden” the “venom” of the ancients.

But just what is the political danger that a French Modern partisan like Perrault sees lurking in ancient texts? In 1688, France had no doubt little to fear from radical republicans bent on reestablishing Athenian liberties. On the other hand, the unruly and defiant heroism of ancient warriors furnished a dangerous model for the contemporary nobility, presumably still smarting from the loss of their prestige and power under an absolute monarchy.² To understand the political scandal of the ancients, consider Perrault's shock, earlier noted, at Homer's description of Achilles' rebellion against his rightful king:

I am offended to hear Achilles call Agamemnon a drunkard and an impudent fellow. [...] It is not possible that kings and great generals have ever been so brutal as to behave in this way; or, if it did happen at some time, it is conduct too indecent to be represented in a poem.

Je suis offensé d'entendre Achille qui traite Agamemnon d'ivrogne et d'impudent. [...] Il n'est pas possible que des rois et de grands capitaines aient jamais été assez brutaux pour en user ainsi; ou si cela est arrivé

quelquefois, ce sont des *mœurs trop indécentes pour être représentées dans un poème*. (*Parallèle* 3:49; italics mine)

The final line leaves no doubt that the *Iliad* exudes the kind of “venom,” as Hobbes would say, from which Perrault would shield the reading public. The visceral nature of Perrault’s alarm is striking. The use of the first person (“I am offended”) suggests that he, or at least his spokesperson in the dialogue, the Abbé, has unconsciously transposed the ancient scene into the historical present. Though the Abbé pretends to speak in terms of timeless human nature (how could such insubordination “ever” arise?), the implicit reference is to the contemporary moment. When he says “Agamemnon,” he is thinking “Louis XIV,” and consequently, as a loyal subject, he takes personal offense at the rebellion of a subordinate. After more than two millennia, Homer’s Achilles poses a surprisingly potent, if symbolic, threat to the French Sun King.

The Regime of Reason

Perrault’s concern is only natural, given the Modern camp’s profound alliance (at least in the early years of the quarrel) with the absolutist monarchy. This alliance is forged both by deep philosophical commitment and by some more fleeting matters of policy.³ Let me begin with the underlying ideological sympathies. As the title of *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* makes clear, the modernity that Perrault praises is by definition monarchical. For Perrault the ultimate value granted to great moments of civilization is determined above all by the capacities of the single rulers who shaped them. Here is how he defines the historical measuring stick against which Louis is to be gauged:

But if the reign of an excellent monarch
Always was of their age’s worth both the cause and the mark,
Then which century for its kings, of men revered,
To the century of Louis can be preferred?

Mais si le règne heureux d’un excellent monarque
Fut toujours de leur prix et la cause et la marque,
Quel siècle pour ses rois, des hommes révééré,
Au siècle de Louis peut être préféré? (*Siècle* 272)

But Perrault does not stop there. If Louis XIV is the first “cause” and defining “mark” of contemporary France’s superiority, if he is “the most

perfect model” (“le plus parfait modèle”) of the king as civilizer, it is not just due to his astonishing personal qualities. It is first and foremost because of his embrace of the new absolutist order, because of the political clarity and coherence of Louis’s “personal reign”:

But when Louis undertook to move by himself alone
The arduous machinery of supreme power,
With what majesty, with what new glory
Did one not see shine the face of the state?
The purity of laws is everywhere reestablished.

Mais lorsqu’il entreprit de mouvoir par lui-même,
Les pénibles ressorts de la grandeur suprême,
De quelle majesté, de quel nouvel éclat,
Ne vit-on pas briller la face de l’État?
La pureté des lois partout est rétablie. (*Siècle* 272)

The reference to the “purity of laws” under Louis XIV begins to suggest something of the philosophical underpinnings of the rationalist embrace of absolutism. What could be more perfectly coherent, clear, and systematic than a regime under a single (and enlightened) authority—“une foi, une loi, un roi”? Indeed, Perrault proceeds in *Le siècle* to praise Louis’s recent prohibition of Protestantism—the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes—celebrating the singularity of the Catholic faith in France as a further sign of a perfectly ordered state.⁴ There is nothing particularly surprising about the Moderns’ penchant for unitarian systems, whether they be political, religious, epistemological, or aesthetic. Perrault reveals himself here once again to be an heir to Descartes and his wide-ranging preference for the clarity of the singular. A passage from *Discours de la méthode* illuminates the paradigm:

there is not so much perfection in those works composed of various pieces and made by diverse hands, as in those on which a single person has worked [. . .]. Just as it is certain that the true religion, of which God alone has made the rules, must be incomparably better regulated than all the others. And to speak of human affairs, I believe that if Sparta was once so flourishing, [it is] because [its laws], having been devised by a single person, all tend toward the same end. And so I considered that the knowledge found in books, [. . .] being composed and enlarged little by little by the opinions of diverse people, is not so close to the truth than the simple reasonings that a man of good sense can naturally perform.

il n'y a pas tant de perfection dans les ouvrages composés de plusieurs pièces, et faits de la main de divers maîtres, qu'en ceux auxquels un seul a travaillé [...]. Comme il est bien certain que l'état de la vraie religion, dont Dieu seul a fait les ordonnances, doit être incomparablement mieux réglé que tous les autres. Et pour parler des choses humaines, je crois que si Sparte a été autrefois très florissante, [c'est] à cause, que [ses lois] n'ayant été inventées que par un seul, elles tendaient toutes à la même fin. Et ainsi je pensai que les sciences des livres [...] s'étant composées et grossies peu à peu des opinions de plusieurs diverses personnes, ne sont point si approchantes de la vérité que les simples raisonnements que peut faire naturellement un homme de bon sens. (*Discours*, part 2, 11–13)

Descartes's catalogue of parallels—between a single artisan and his work, a single god and its creation, a single lawgiver (in this instance, Sparta's Lycurgus) and the state—affirms the superiority of reason over tradition, and likewise of the methodical rigor of the lone thinker over the haphazard findings of a multitude. And in the political realm, the implication is clear. For the Moderns, Descartes's Lycurgus lives again (or rather is incarnated in a more perfected, modern form) in Louis.

Modernizing Programs and Propaganda

Louis XIV was of course no radical philosopher, abstractly constructing a new state in the perfect isolation of Descartes's famous "stove." The absolutist system was the fruition of a long evolution and claimed to rest, at least partially, on ancient French traditions. But the first part of Louis's reign was still one that could be seen by contemporaries as resolutely modernizing—not just in its embrace of unitarian order, but also in its wider political, economic, social, and cultural policies. Such are the more local arguments in favor of Louis XIV, the matters of particular policy that attracted the Moderns to the monarch. A rationally constituted monarchy might conceivably exist at any point in human history, but the particular achievements of the monarch in question are rooted in the governing decisions and political strategies that defined the first two decades of his personal reign.

Some context is necessary. During the 1660s and 1670s, Perrault was an important adviser to Louis's powerful minister, Colbert, who oversaw the culmination of a program undertaken over four decades earlier by Richelieu to modernize and centralize the French state. The period of Colbert's ministerial ascendancy (1661–83) witnessed not only a vigorous reform of the tax collection system and the judiciary but also an array of

programs designed for the ordered regulation of such disparate domains as public forests, prostitution, and public hygiene.⁵ Everywhere the regime attempted to uproot old customs and replace them with more modern ideas and administration. To this end, it firmly suppressed the remnants of popular superstition—banning, for example, the practices of alchemy and judicial astrology as “frivolous and pernicious,” and forbidding the official persecution of witches, which had no doubt cost a few thousand lives in the past century.⁶ Even historians who see in Louis XIV a predominantly conservative force in European history concede that his early reign was a period of “progressive” monarchy, one that combined the new ideas of rational order with a belief in absolute power—making Louis XIV something of an enlightened despot *avant la lettre*.⁷

Of course, the domestic aims of the regime went beyond these legal and administrative reforms to a perhaps even more ambitious reorganization of culture. Following the example set by Richelieu in founding the Académie Française in 1635, a vast ensemble of official academies were decreed to mobilize men of talent (women, though powerful in literary salons, were not inducted) in the service of the monarchy. These royal institutions, effectively designed to advance new ideas and a new order in the arts and sciences, arose in a breathtaking rush during the king’s first decade of personal rule: the Académie de Danse (1661), the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture (1663),⁸ the Académie Française de Rome (1666), the Académie des Sciences (1666), the Académie d’Architecture (1671), and the Académie d’Opéra (1671), the last quickly replaced by the Académie Royale de Musique (1672). Finally, a crucial academic committee was established by Colbert in 1663 to supervise the general image-making activities surrounding the monarchy: the Petite Académie. Including Charles Perrault among its members, it met regularly in Colbert’s home to oversee projects for royal monuments and palaces, for medals and tapestries, and, not least, for the royal festivities at Versailles, to which I will return.⁹

For Perrault and his allies, the larger consequences of this modernizing program were clear: France had reached a level of cultural and social advancement never before attained by any other civilization. Furthermore, by the early 1670s, the regime had fully confirmed its military and political hegemony in Europe—one that its supporters imagined as invincible, even after the tide began turning against France in the 1680s.¹⁰ The time of unquestioned triumphalism had arrived. While Ancient apologists contented themselves with favorable comparisons between Louis and the great leaders of antiquity, the Moderns suggested that the French king had surpassed them to such a degree as to become *incomparably* superior.¹¹ The regime’s early panegyric epithet for the monarch, Louis-Auguste, now seemed inad-

equate for this unparalleled glory. Why compare the king to the dwindling shadow of a Roman emperor? Clearly a new title was needed, and one was created. To commemorate the same victory in Franche-Comté that inspired the festivities, the Petite Académie directed the construction in 1674 of a new triumphal arch at the Porte Saint Martin. It bore an inscription to the king under his new appellation, “Ludovico Magno.”¹² Perrault’s beloved epithet Louis le Grand thus superseded the earlier titles “Louis-Auguste” and “le nouvel Alexandre,” even “le Roi-Soleil.” The king no longer needed to be compared to past heroes or gods. This new fabricated star shone absolutely alone.

This titular transformation was certainly part of a larger move to erase antiquity from royal propaganda or, at least, as Perrault suggests, to prudently keep as much of it hidden as possible. Headed up again by the modernizing Petite Académie, the regime’s self-representation moved away from the symbols and allegory of antiquity to literal representations of contemporary events. While the propaganda campaigns of the 1660s depended largely on representations of ancient Greek and Roman myth and history, a new wave of royal publicity in the following decades depicted the king’s glory in more direct terms, unadorned by reference to ancient models.¹³ It was a transformation that has been characterized as a “crisis of representation,” in which ancient *exempla* and allegorical rhetoric lose their prestige to modern history and literal expression, and in which Greco-Roman *mythistoire* falls before the positive power of contemporary fact.¹⁴

Whatever language one chooses to describe this shift, the evidence of its presence is compelling. By 1678, for example, the earlier plan to paint the Grande Galerie of Versailles with scenes from the labors of Hercules, allegorically suggestive of the monarch’s valor, was abandoned for a more literal pictorial program, championed by Perrault, depicting the recent military victories of Louis himself.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the state-run Imprimerie Royale, which had devoted itself from its foundation in 1640 to the editing and printing of learned editions of Latin, Greek and Hebrew classics, moved in the 1670s away from antiquity and toward the publication of new findings in the sciences, a transformation which later produced such monumental editions as the *Œuvres* of Buffon. The royal press’s embrace of modernity was of course not without self-interest: it also undertook the luxurious documentation of recent state propaganda—including the royal festivities that were key sites of modern propaganda.¹⁶

The Modern program did not, however, content itself with (at least partially) effacing antiquity; it also insisted upon denigrating it. The absolutism of the late seventeenth century was indeed a kind of presentism, as François Hartog noted (*Anciens* 203). But if its temporal narcissism led, as

he also noted, to a kind of “history block,” it does not mean that the past could be entirely ignored. Here the Moderns innovate by transforming the traditional panegyric topos of the historical parallel. It had been a common practice since the Renaissance to assert that a contemporary king equaled, even occasionally surpassed, ancient models; but to *disparage* those models in such a parallel, *that* is the innovation of the late seventeenth-century Moderns.¹⁷ Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, Perrault’s precursor as Modern leader, set the tone in his 1674 *Le triomphe de Louis XIV et son siècle*, in which antiquity is no longer the object of arduous, if successful, emulation, but instead of pure disdain for its “fausse lumière.”¹⁸

To grasp the extent of this comparative, or rather contrastive, turn in propaganda programs, consider the case of Molière’s panegyrics created for the Versailles festivities. While his earlier work for the palace, such as the 1664 inaugural fêtes, *Les plaisirs de l’île enchantée*, ostentatiously celebrated ancient models for the monarch, later festivities abandon all reliance on past glory to justify the reign. Antiquity becomes more a place of imaginary pleasures and exotic passion than an object of political and moral emulation. Molière instinctively adheres to the general program. The verses attributed to the playwright for the opening of the 1668 *Grand divertissement royal de Versailles* offer a stunning example of this modernizing evolution.¹⁹ Here the attitude to antiquity is one of pure dismissal. While antiquity was prized most in 1664 for its magical, fabled quality, this same past is here discounted as specious “fiction”:

There is no limit to the glory of the Prince of the French; it reaches everywhere, and throughout the world the truth of its history will surpass all the fictions of old times: in vain will one sing of the magnificent remnants of those heroic destinies that art was pleased to raise to the heavens. One sees all this splendor effaced by [Louis’s] deeds, and those demigods that past history celebrates are not to our mind what Louis is to our eyes.

Du Prince des Français rien ne borne la gloire,
 À tout elle s’étend, et chez les nations
 Les vérités de son histoire
 Vont passer des vieux temps toutes les fictions:
 On aura beau chanter les restes magnifiques
 De tous ces destins héroïques
 Qu’un bel art prit plaisir d’élever jusqu’aux Cieux.
 On en voit par ses faits la splendeur effacée,
 Et tous ces fameux demi-dieux
 Dont fait bruit l’histoire passée,

Ne sont point à notre pensée
Ce que Louis est à nos yeux. (OC 2:451)

In dismissing pagan fable here, Molière hews closely, if only tactically, to what will be the Modern party line. First of all, he inflates the king by deflating the Greco-Roman past. More specifically, the line of attack here, the rationalist dismantling of ancient pagan “fable,” will be, as the next chapter will show, a favored strategy of Perrault and Fontenelle. In any case, the modernist evolution in Molière’s royal panegyrics does not end here. The rhetorical contrast between rational modern fact and specious ancient fiction reaches its most precise formulation in the last of Molière’s encomia to the king: the prologue to *Le malade imaginaire*, originally written for 1672 fêtes but first performed posthumously at Versailles in 1674. The panegyric prologue of *Le malade* repeats the 1668 phrasing, but this time the contrast is made explicit as the historic rival defeated by Louis XIV is named: Ancient Greece.

The fabled exploits sung by Greece are effaced in all their glory before our eyes by a brilliant catalogue of beautiful, true feats. And all these famous demigods vaunted by past history are not to our mind what Louis is to our eyes.

Des fabuleux exploits que la Grèce a chantés
Par un brillant amas de belles vérités
 Nous voyons la gloire effacée.
 Et tous ces fameux demi-dieux
 Que vante l’histoire passée,
 Ne sont point à notre pensée
 Ce que Louis est à nos yeux. (2:1095)

So it is that the royal panegyric becomes at times less tuneful praise than critical parallel. It is a sly strategy that Perrault repeatedly adopts, beginning in *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*; one might recall his fanciful assertion that if only Homer had been born two millennia later, under the auspices of Louis XIV, he would have created heroes “less brutal, less cruel, and less capricious.” Is this praise of the present by shrewdly understated contrast, a kind of panegyric *litotes*, through which the dimness of ancient stars allow Louis’s to shine more brightly? Or is it nothing more than an encomiastic Trojan horse for the sacking of antiquity? It seems that the negative end of the stick dominates. Indeed, Perrault’s poem leads to an outpouring of light verse panegyrics, in the form of parlor games, crafted to praise Louis by disparaging antiquity.²⁰ Houdar de La Motte adopts the same

strategy in the panegyric dedication of his 1714 adaptation of the *Iliad* to Louis XIV, in which he rejects the very idea of a parallel between Homeric heroes and the king as grossly insulting to “le plus parfait modèle des Rois” (180). The passage, partially quoted earlier, repays added attention here:

It is true that [Homer] depicts heroes to which one has often compared Your Majesty; but I have strongly felt in studying them that one has misused their ancient reputation in this parallel, and that one should never have honored them with your own virtues. They knew nothing of this wise merit that is enlightened by reason, nor of this steadfastness that rises above changing events, nor of this heroic disinterestedness that adheres alone to duty and justice: in what way, then, could they possibly resemble you?

Il est vrai qu’[Homère] peint des héros à qui l’on a souvent comparé Votre Majesté; mais j’ai trop senti, en les étudiant, qu’on a abusé de leur ancienne réputation dans ce parallèle, et qu’on n’a jamais dû leur faire honneur de vos vertus. Ils ne connaissaient ni cette valeur sage, que la raison éclaire, ni cette égalité d’âme qu’aucun événement ne déconcerte, ni ce désintéressement héroïque qui ramène tout au devoir et à la justice: par où pourraient-ils donc vous ressembler? (“Épître au Roi,” in *OC* 1:180)

Here La Motte encapsulates the Modern embrace of Louis’s reign. He celebrates the plenitude of modern reason and justice only in order to highlight their absence in antiquity; he decries as impertinent any recourse to antiquity to describe a reign that is incomparable and that can only be adequately measured by its own successes. Not only are the vices of antiquity found scandalous, but equally scandalous are any affirmative parallels between antiquity and modernity.

What remains? An antiquity that can serve only as a counter-example, an object lesson in all to avoid. Such is, as we have seen, Fontenelle’s view of the “idiocies of antiquity.” Or, perhaps a little more forgivingly, an antiquity (for Hobbes) whose “venom” is to be purged, or whose “inexpressible” outrages (for Perrault) are to be “kept hidden”—all through a process of suppression, correction, and cleansing. In short, the very process that La Motte openly adopts in his modernizing and bowdlerizing abridgment of the *Iliad*, in which only an emaciated but edifying twelve books of the original twenty-four are destined to survive.

7 * The Pagan Menace

Christianity and Modernity

At least as shocking as the political universe of antiquity was its religious one. In many ways the quarrel can be seen as another battle in the long struggle between Christian and pagan cultures—or, at least, pagan culture as digested and transmitted by Renaissance humanists.¹ It is certainly true that few causes so clearly united the Moderns as their shared animosity toward Greco-Roman polytheism, to which they opposed a rationalist form of Christianity. Of course, the union of Cartesian reason and Christian faith was not always an easy alliance, despite the prodigious efforts at synthesis by figures such as Malebranche. Sometimes the balance tilts toward faith, as with Perrault, and sometimes toward a more critical rationalism, as with Fontenelle. And in Fontenelle's case, the wry skepticism concerning the abuses of religion may even cast doubt on the sincerity of his praise of the reasonableness of Christianity.

But if the Modern partisans had differences concerning their own approach to contemporary religion, they could nevertheless coalesce around a common enemy: a Greco-roman mythology that was neither Christian nor rational. Here again, the Moderns reject any defense of paganism grounded in historical or cultural pluralism. Paganism is for them a matter not of relatives but of absolutes. The shock, Moderns assert, is not just to arbitrary modern tastes but, more profoundly, to universal reason. So it is that La Motte insists that the ancient Greeks themselves, philosophically and morally underdeveloped though they were, should have had the minimal good sense to be horrified by their own religion. When denouncing the indecent and irrational behavior of Homer's gods, he allows no indulgence for changing historical conditions and beliefs: "even if we put ourselves in

the place of the pagans themselves, we still find at every step an occasion for *scandal*” (“en se mettant même à la place des païens, on trouve encore à chaque pas des occasions de *scandale*”; *Discours* 29; italics mine). It is hard not to detect a certain orthodox religiosity (or at least a forceful appeal to its most conservative instincts) in La Motte’s scandalized condemnation of paganism. In this sense, the Modern movement proves to be anything but a precursor to the supposed neopaganism, or “Modern Paganism,” to reprise Peter Gay’s term, of the rising anticlerical Enlightenment. The reality is that Perrault and his heirs find themselves more often in the camp of censoring Christianity than in that of freethinking humanists. It should therefore be no surprise that La Motte’s shock echoes so well the fiery language of an ultra-orthodox figure such as Bossuet. Although no lover of modern innovation for itself, the stern bishop shared with his correspondent Perrault a deep apprehension concerning the poetic attraction to the “insane and scandalous cult” of paganism (“un culte insensé et scandaleux”; *Discours* 257). And Bossuet also claims that the scandal in question resists all arguments based on changing historical conditions and attitudes. The ancients should simply have known better than to accept paganism’s “infamies”: “Greece, as polished and wise as it was, still accepted these abominable mysteries” (“La Grèce, toute polie et toute sage qu’elle était, avait reçu ces mystères abominables”; 255, 56). Bossuet concurs with La Motte and the Moderns on this point: Being pagan is no excuse for paganism.



The antipaganism of the Modern party is deeply rooted in the prologue to the quarrel, the polemics in the early 1670s in which Perrault cut his teeth in literary debates. A crucial figure in Perrault’s intellectual development, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, was, as earlier noted, then spearheading the early Modern movement. This poet, playwright, and polemicist—a favorite of the late Cardinal Richelieu and promoter of both absolutist ideology and Catholic orthodoxy—published in the last years of his life the first full manifestoes of modern French triumphalism.² In 1673 he unleashed a series of polemical prefaces to a new edition of his 1657 *Clovis, ou La France chrétienne*, an epic poem “singing of the origins of Christian monarchy” (“chantant les origines de la monarchie chrétienne”). Promoting the accomplishments of the current regime was hardly new to the writer. Indeed, in the very first edition of *Clovis*, Desmarets foresaw (a decade and a half in advance) that the nineteen-year-old king would one day be hailed Louis the Great and be seen as surpassing Alexander. However, in the 1673 edition, Desmarets goes considerably further by elaborating much broader

claims for the superiority of Louis XIV's France and its language and literature. But this praise often proves to be less a joyful celebration of modern times than a ruthless *machine de guerre* against antiquity.

Desmarets's claims concerning the superiority of the living French language to dead languages, though not without resonance at the time, play a relatively minor role in the coming quarrel, which, as we have seen, is directed toward a nonscholarly audience largely unconcerned with neo-Latin compositions.³ No Ancient partisan would claim that contemporary poetry should be in Greek or Latin; that battle was over before the quarrel began. In contrast, the moral and aesthetic value of pagan-inspired literature, to which the Ancients clung so tightly, was crucial to the coming struggle. And for Desmarets, the most offensive flaw of ancient poetry was not its language but its religion:

One must consider the horrible blindness of ancients poets, whose most shameful, inexcusable, and blameworthy fault is this: even while having the freedom to make their gods as they wished and to give them virtues, actions, words, and resolutions worthy of divinity, and even while having no true history to act as their guide and thus having a open field for free fictional invention [...] they nevertheless—instead of making them wise, just and constant [...] according to the high idea of perfection conceived of by the wise philosophers of Greece—made these gods vicious, impetuous in their actions, cruel, vindictive, ignorant, powerless, unfaithful, perfidious, and ridiculous.

Il faut considérer l'horrible aveuglement des poètes anciens, dont le défaut le plus honteux, le moins excusable, et le plus digne de reproche, est de ce qu'ayant eu une entière liberté de faire leurs dieux tels qu'ils voulaient, et de leur attribuer des vertus, des actions, des paroles et des résolutions dignes de la divinité, n'ayant aucune véritable histoire pour guide, et ayant un champ libre pour la fiction; [...] toutefois, au lieu de les feindre sages, justes, constants [...] selon la plus haute idée de perfection que les sages de la Grèce avaient pu concevoir; ils les ont faits vicieux, emportés dans leurs mouvements, cruels, vindicatifs, ignorants, impuissants, inconstants, perfides, et ridicules. (*Clovis* 719)

As for La Motte and Bossuet, so too for Desmarets paganism is simply "inexcusable." Historical circumstances cannot mitigate the scandal; there were, after all, ancient philosophers who overcame their age's "shameful" superstitions. And, indeed, Desmarets's catalogue of the vices of the Gods closely echoes that of Plato in the *Republic*. The practice of pagan poetry, even more than the general beliefs of pagan times, is thus particularly to

blame; for Desmarets, and for the Moderns who follow him, it is a poetry without philosophy—or rather a poetry opposed to philosophy, that is, opposed to reason and truth.

Naturally there are limits to Desmarets's concessions to enlightened ancient thinkers such as Plato—concessions that are designed more to damn Greek poetry than to praise their philosophy. Even while admitting that the author of the *Republic* could stumble upon some truths, Desmarets holds that modern religious truth alone produces believable fiction: “Christians, who alone have attained the truth, alone attain the verisimilar, [...] and those that send us back to the rules and the poems of the ancients, want to throw us back into darkness” (“Les Chrétiens, qui seuls ont la vérité, ont seuls le vraisemblable, [...] et ceux qui veulent nous renvoyer aux règles et aux poèmes des païens, veulent nous mettre dans les ténèbres”).⁴ For Desmarets—as for many of the Modern apologists to follow—the choice is clear: either literary works are important and reveal truth, in which case they must meet intense philosophical, ideological, and theological scrutiny, or they are simply frivolous pastimes of no intellectual or political value. As an ambitious epic poet, Desmarets of course clings to the first opinion—to the revelatory nature of literature—and thus suggests that poetry be submitted to the same expectations and constraints that rule in other domains of knowledge. There is no poetic exception in regard to truth. The moderns alone have it; the ancients, only false “fiction.”

But the passage makes clear how precarious modern superiority is for Desmarets, and how great the continuing threat posed by pagan literature: the “rebel groups” of Ancient partisans threaten to “throw us back into the darkness” of paganism. And just as on the political front Desmarets decries the “unjust audacity” of those who dare “elevate Augustus above the great Louis,”⁵ so on the religious front he urges Louis XIV to take bold repressive action against the champions of pagan literature, to “avenge the true God that you serve against these men without faith, who capriciously desire to make pagans of us all, at least in poetry” (“venger le vrai Dieu que tu sers, / De ces hommes sans foi, de qui la fantaisie / Veut nous faire païens au moins en poésie”).⁶ The explicit menace in this passage, and the vilification of ancient apologists as atheists, makes clear just how serious the stakes are in this literary battle. The defenders of ancient poetry “despise our religion”; they are, Desmarets repeatedly claims, dangerous “freethinkers” (“libertins”; *Clovis* 744, 741, 730, 728). Indeed, he goes so far as to rename the incipient Ancient party, led by Boileau and known as the *cabale* or the *cabale du sublime*, the “cabale de l’impiété” (745).

The threat of Desmarets’s “avenging of god”—especially if allied, as Desmarets wishes, with the full force of the absolute regime—strikes a vi-

olent note that could not be lost on his supposedly freethinking and pagan-loving opponents in the Ancient party. Nothing perhaps more effectively illustrates the aggressive nature of Desmaret's Christian fervor than the engraved frontispiece of *Clovis* (see figure 1). It depicts an elegantly groomed and courtly Clovis, bowing before the cross and sporting a robe patterned in fleur de lys. What strikes our attention, though, is less the classicizing depiction of devotion, sweetly *saint-sulpicienne* before its time, than the disturbing image that jumps out of the bottom right corner, where we see the king's feet treading on the dismembered body parts of a Mercury strewn roughly across the ground. These represent of course a shattered icon and not the broken body of a god. Yet the realistic depiction of their flesh gives the decapitated head, trunk, and limbs the disturbing aura of bloody combat. The violence erupting from the scene—and from Desmaret's calls for the king to perform something of the same repressive operation against the modern poet-pagans—is arresting, though hardly exceptional. Indeed, the image redeploys key elements from the frontispiece of the most important Christian drama of the seventeenth century, penned by the Modern party's most heralded playwright, Corneille: his 1643 *Polyeucte* (see figure 2).⁷ As the eponymous hero-saint of the *tragédie chrétienne* swings his arms aloft with a menacing pick and treads triumphantly on the limbs of pagan icons that he has dismembered, the image once again takes on a violent immediacy. Indeed, the painful expression on the decapitated head under his foot suggests more tortured flesh than sculpted fragment.

The Ancient party certainly felt the repressive force of this Christian zeal. Indeed, “zeal” is the word that Boileau uses in his 1674 *Art poétique* to rebut Desmaret's Christian modernism. To those who wish to cleanse literature of all that shocks contemporary religious beliefs by eliminating pagan allusions and mythological allegories, Boileau replies that such literary policing is nothing but dangerous bigotry: Desmaret and his supporters “want, in their false zeal, to ban everywhere allegory as a kind of idolatry” (“Et partout des discours, comme une idolâtrie / Dans leur faux zèle, iront chasser l'allégorie”; *Art poétique* III, in *OC* 174). Allegory, Boileau asserts, is to be subjected not to theological inspection, but instead to poetic verisimilitude. It is a point that the Ancients will repeat throughout the quarrel, and there is no doubt that they gain the upper hand in the matter, if only temporarily. When Hume, a half century later, looks back on the quarrel (as he so often does in his essays on literature and art), he finds the Christian triumphalism of seventeenth-century France to be one of its disfiguring faults. Citing precisely *Polyeucte*, he condemns the “bigotry” of “zealots” filled with a “hatred of every other worship.”⁸ Hume argues that the literary critic must simply “overlook” all religious principles in order “to



FIGURE 1. Engraving from Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin's *Clovis*. Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France.



FIGURE 2. Frontispiece of the original edition (1643) of Corneille's *Polyeucte*. Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France.

form a just notion of ancient poetry” on its own terms (*Standard of Taste* 23). It is an attitude of temporal cosmopolitanism, directly inspired by late seventeenth-century Ancient apologists, that will encounter great success in what we might call the post-Modern (party) Enlightenment.

To return to the early years of the quarrel, those who followed in Desmarets’s footsteps (and he explicitly asked the young Perrault to do so)⁹ espoused what they considered a “just notion” of poetry that was considerably less pluralistic and tolerant than Hume’s. And although Desmarets’s religious tenets became more subdued among his successors, his linking of poetic and theological truth and his reviling of pagan fictions remained crucial arms in the Modern arsenal. It is thus no surprise that Perrault’s key spokesperson for the Modern cause in the *Parallèle* is an ecclesiastic figure, an abbé imbued with Malebranchian Christian rationalism.¹⁰ Nor that Perrault, like Desmarets, celebrates Louis XIV’s Catholic “zeal” in forcefully “suppressing heresy” with the 1685 revocation of the Edict of Nantes.¹¹ Nor that he repeatedly accuses ancient apologists of a kind of “adoration,” which, it should now be clear, suggests something of a highly unorthodox worship: the modern “genuflecting” before pagans constitutes in itself a kind of paganism.¹² Nor, finally, that in correspondence with Bossuet on the superiority of Christian over pagan art, Perrault follows Desmarets in penning his own (and soon forgotten) Christian epic, *Saint Paulin*.¹³

The Lure of Myth

The moral implications of this militant Christian perspective demand our attention, but before turning to those, it is important to understand that the hostility to pagan mythology is based on the Moderns’ understanding of the rational as much as of the ethical. From *Le siècle*, with its denunciation of the “fables” of antiquity,¹⁴ to the pious *Pensées chrétiennes* (1694–1703), which he composed in the last decade of his life, Perrault rails against the fundamental unreasonableness of pagan myths.¹⁵ His commentaries on Homeric gods are particularly informative in this regard:

In the first book of the *Iliad*, Vulcan says to his mother Juno that he is afraid that Jupiter will beat her. That is hardly worthy either of a god or of Homer.

Dans le premier livre de l’*Iliade*, Vulcain dit à Junon sa mère, qu’il craint que Jupiter ne la batte. Cela n’est guère digne ni des dieux, ni d’Homère. (*Parallèle* 3:55).

The offense here is partly a moral one: depicting Olympian gods as wife-beaters makes for a dangerous example; but it is also a logical one: depicting such potent gods as buffoons and poltroons is absurd. It is nothing less than the profound *puerility* of the entire mythical landscape that Perrault attacks here. The passage continues:

When it rains and the sun shines at the same time, children say that the devil is beating his wife; and when it thunders, Homer says that Jupiter is beating his wife. The two seem about the same.

Quand il pleut, et qu'il fait soleil en même temps, les enfants disent que le diable bat sa femme; et quand il tonne, Homère dit que Jupiter bat la sienne. Cela me semble assez égal. (3:56)

Mythical thinking is for Perrault just one more proof that the ancients lived in “the infancy of the world.” As Perrault’s Chevalier asks in disbelief of the Odyssey’s absurd marvels, “When one is older than twelve years of age, is it possible to take pleasure in such tales?” (“Quand on a douze ans passés, peut-on prendre plaisir à de tels contes?”; 3:85). Indeed, the whole Olympian construction seems to be the fabrication of an infant’s crude imagination, one that can only be compared in modern times to such fairy-tale amusements as *Peau d’âne* (“Donkey Skin”; *Parallèle* 3:120). The irony is that Perrault was the first modern writer to publish such tales in literary form (with verse tales such as *Peau d’âne* in 1693–1695, followed by the 1697 prose *Contes* that introduced in print such figures as Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood). But then Perrault claimed precisely that his fairy tales were more moral, and more reasonable, than ancient myths.¹⁶ In any case, when they were critiquing pagan marvels, the comparison with fairy tales was, in the hands of the Modern partisans, always a disparaging one. As La Motte later phrased it:

Would it be reasonable to claim to amuse grown men by the same fictions that would have charmed children? The Greeks must have still been in the imbecility of childhood to be satisfied with the gods of Homer.

Serait-il raisonnable de prétendre amuser des hommes faits par les mêmes fictions qui auraient charmé des enfants? Il fallait que les Grecs fussent encore dans l’imbécillité de l’enfance, pour s’être contentés des dieux d’Homère. (*Discours* 22–23)

La Motte’s language is damning, but none of the Moderns can match Fontenelle in his relentless critique of the puerility and irrationality of Greco-

Roman mythology. We have already encountered his first attack, from the 1683 *Dialogues des morts*, where Montezuma unmasks the foolish credulity of the Athenians in their religious beliefs. In regard to those gods, Fontenelle continues the campaign with his 1686 *Histoire des oracles*, a work ridiculing Christian claims that the arrival of Christ on earth silenced the “demons” that inhabited pagan oracles. We confront here one of the most powerful tensions within the Modern party. There is no doubt that the rational skepticism of the *Histoire* undermines certain ancient Christian traditions and beliefs. How is it possible to reconcile the freethinking tendencies in Fontenelle with his support of Perrault’s orthodox campaign? Fontenelle might, in the end, claim that there is no contradiction here. After all, he forcefully expresses his belief that *true* Christianity, that is to say the rational religion of his own time, is exempt from the kind of superstition that tainted the early church, still too close to pagan antiquity. If Christianity has weaknesses to be mocked, they are ancient ones; its strengths, on the other hand, are definitely modern:

Christianity has always been capable of doing without false proofs [i.e., oracles], but it is now more capable of this than ever before, due to the care that great men of this century have taken to place it on a true foundation, with more strength than the ancients ever did.

Le Christianisme a toujours été par lui-même en état de se passer de fausses preuves, mais il y est encore présentement plus que jamais, par les soins que de grands hommes de ce siècle ont pris de l’établir sur ses véritables fondements, avec plus de force que les anciens n’avaient jamais fait. (*Histoire* 5)¹⁷

Whatever one makes of Fontenelle’s complex attitude to Christianity, no such ambivalence dilutes his denunciation of “all the madness [*folie*] and all the barbarity” of paganism (56). And he assigns the cause of this madness not only to an “ignorant age” but, more particularly (following Perrault’s lead), to the Greeks, to their “general inclination” for superstition, for absurd fictions that defy logic.¹⁸ To expose these tales for what they are, Fontenelle aims to pierce “the shadows of so remote an antiquity” (“les ténèbres d’une antiquité si éloignée”; 85), to shed unfiltered light on the “the thickest shadows of paganism” (“les plus épaisses ténèbres du paganisme”; 195), and to unmask “what was in paganism the most extravagant, the most barbarous, the most contrary to reason and to the common interest of men” (“ce qu’il y avait dans le paganisme de plus extravagant, de plus barbare, et de plus opposé à la raison et à l’intérêt du commun des hommes”; 178).

Fontenelle fully realizes his project of exposing the absurdity and barbarity of pagan myth in his later *De l'origine des fables* ("fables" denoting here what we call "mythology"). The text opens with something of a manifesto:

We have, since childhood, been so accustomed to the mythological tales [*fables*] of the Greeks that, when we reach an age when we can reason, we no longer think of them as astonishing as they are. But if we strip our eyes of dulling custom, we cannot fail to be terrified at seeing the entire ancient history of a people that is nothing but a heap of chimeras, day-dreams, and absurdities.

On nous a si fort accoutumés, pendant notre enfance, aux fables des Grecs que, quand nous sommes en état de raisonner, nous ne nous avisons plus de les trouver aussi étonnantes qu'elles le sont. Mais, si l'on vient à se défaire des yeux de l'habitude, il ne se peut qu'on ne soit épouvanté de voir toute l'ancienne histoire d'un peuple, qui n'est qu'un amas de chimères, de rêveries, et d'absurdités. (*De l'origine* 11)

It is the perfect summary of the Moderns' project: by "stripping our eyes," by vigorously defamiliarizing the mythological tales that childhood reading have rendered anodyne, Fontenelle will awaken readers to their scandalous, even "terrifying," reality. This requires something of a shock treatment. One must confront the almost unimaginable primitiveness of the Greek world that gave birth to these myths: "In the first centuries of the world, [...] ignorance and barbarity had to be in such excess that we can barely picture it anymore" ("dans les premiers siècles du monde, [...] l'ignorance et la barbarie durent être à un excès que nous ne sommes presque plus en état de nous représenter"; *De l'origine* 11–12). Once more, it is the primitive Amerindians—the "Iroquois" are again singled out (12)—that provide the privileged term for evoking the nearly unimaginable ancients, "those poor savages who first inhabited the world" ("ces pauvres sauvages, qui ont les premiers habité le monde"; 16). Like Perrault's early Greeks, the Amerindians are children, driven by simple imaginative analogies: they see thunder, and they think of an angry man in the sky lancing a "spear of fire" (16). They intuitively forge such analogies without drawing on reason or morals, both of which are unknown to them. Their gods thus mirror their undeveloped state. "The first men are extremely brutal, strength alone counts for them; their gods will be almost as brutal, and only a little stronger" ("Les premiers hommes sont fort brutaux, et ils donnent tout à la force; les dieux seront presque aussi brutaux, et seulement un peu plus puissants"; 19). Of course, they are also "cruels, bizarres, injustes, ignorants" (18).

In his effort to understand the intellectual and cultural conditions that produced Greek myths, Fontenelle has been hailed as one of the precursors of the modern scientific study of mythology.¹⁹ It might seem strange that such a colorful and violent denunciation of paganism could be seen as a founding text in a movement dedicated to the objective and comparative study of mythological thinking. But the paradox might not be unique to Fontenelle. As Marcel Detienne has remarked, the nineteenth-century elaboration of a self-proclaimed “scientific” study of mythology was in fact characterized by a similar repulsion to its subject. The “new mythology,” he argues, “presents itself from the start as a science of the scandalous” (“se présente d’emblée comme une science du scandaleux”; *L’invention* 19). Detienne cites such mid-nineteenth-century founders of comparative mythology as Andrew Lang, for whom mythological tales were fundamentally “savage,” “absurd,” “infamous,” and “repulsive,” and Max Müller, who asserted that the brutality of the Greek gods would frighten even (had he just read Fontenelle and Perrault?) the savage “red-skins” of America (18–19). Detienne concludes that the scientific interest in mythology arose out of a “sudden” realization that Greek mythology was “indecent” and that it spoke “a mad language” (“un langage insensé”).

Detienne asks just what was the “seismic shift” of the nineteenth century that caused mythological tales known for so long to “suddenly provoke a scandal” (19). In response, we might answer that the “scandal” was hardly so new or sudden. If indeed it takes a seismic shift to reawaken the mind to the shock of ancient mythology, we have seen that the seventeenth century experienced its own upheaval in the understanding of the past: the rupture with classical antiquity that gave rise to the quarrel. And if the French classical age did not yet witness the birth of an autonomous discipline or science of mythology, it nevertheless did see the birth of a “new philosophy” dedicated to the rational critique of the pagan past.²⁰ Like their nineteenth-century successors, the Moderns were also stunned by the “mad” nature of mythological thinking; and also like their scientific heirs, the Moderns discerned something of the linguistic quality of this supposed madness.²¹ Indeed, Fontenelle links the absurdity and immorality of pagan myths to the supposedly deficient vocabulary of primitive speech: “wisdom and justice did not even have names in the earliest ancient languages, as they still do not among the native barbarians of America” (“la sagesse et la justice n’avaient pas seulement de nom dans les langues anciennes, comme elles n’en ont pas encore aujourd’hui chez les barbares de l’Amérique”; *De l’origine* 18).

The menace of paganism is thus real and profound for the Moderns.

The urgency to condemn it arises from the perception that its brutal irrationality continues to hold sway even in the modern era. And not just among the primitive peoples outside Europe. No, for Fontenelle, it is a fundamentally human weakness, an inherent attraction to the supernatural, which demands unceasing vigilance from the learned. Antiquity is not buried yet; its demons still possess us. "If one has studied human nature even a little, one well knows what power these supernatural marvels exercise on it" ("si l'on a un peu étudié l'esprit humain, on sait quelle force le merveilleux a sur lui"; *Histoire* 29). Thus his conclusion to *De l'origine des fables*:

Let us not seek anything else in mythical tales but the history of the errors of the human mind. [...] Filling one's head with all the follies [*extravagances*] of the Phoenicians or Greeks is not a science; but it is a science to know what led the Phoenicians and Greeks to these follies. Since all men resemble one another so greatly, there can exist no people whose foolishness should not make us tremble.

Ne cherchons donc autre chose dans les fables que l'histoire des erreurs de l'esprit humain. [...] Ce n'est pas une science de s'être rempli la tête de toutes les extravagances des Phéniciens et des Grecs ; mais c'en est une de savoir ce qui a conduit les Phéniciens et les Grecs à ces extravagances. Tous les hommes se ressemblent si fort, qu'il n'y a point de peuple dont les sottises ne nous doivent faire trembler. (39–40)

Like all the charms of antiquity, pagan myth possesses a nearly irresistible atavistic force. And while a noxious reversion to our ancestors' primitive thinking might afflict first and foremost the kind of erudite myth collector that Fontenelle targets above, it can equally overtake the common reader each time a book of ancient tales is opened.²² We are all potential recidivists where the lure of the pagan is concerned. As Fontenelle later wrote, somewhat more indulgently, of the implacable seduction of ancient poetry, "we welcome it still today with pleasure, and we let it exercise on us almost all its ancient power, so easily do we fall back into our infancy" ("nous le recevons encore aujourd'hui avec plaisir, et nous lui laissons exercer sur nous presque tout son ancien empire, nous retombons aisément en enfance"; "Sur la poésie," in *OC* 5:543). Of course, Fontenelle cannot, anymore than his ally Perrault, eliminate the charm of the irrational and infantile, be they found in ancient Greek poems or in today's fairy tales. We will later see, though, with what censuring "prudence," as the preface of the *Parallèle* urges, these two writers would have them "exposed" to

the public—if not simply “kept hidden”—lest they spread what La Motte calls “the contagion of the errors and absurdity of paganism” (“la contagion des erreurs et de l’absurdité du paganisme”; *Discours* 29–30). For the Moderns, it is contagion that sometimes calls for corrective medicine, sometimes for strict quarantine.

8 * Morality & Sociability

Barbarous Ancients

In the view of the Moderns, the indecency of the pagan gods exposes more than the purely intellectual and spiritual errors arising from the ancients' misapprehension of divine nature. The scandal of paganism also reveals, as Fontenelle remarked, the day-to-day moral crudeness of the humans who created those illusory gods as mirrors of their own savage nature. The pagans had the gods they deserved. We turn then from gods to humans—or rather to human literary characters, for it is above all the poetic representations of exemplary figures (as we have seen from Perrault's denunciation of the shepherd's slap) that obsess the Moderns.

The two scandals, theological and moral, frequently converge. Just as was the case with the primitive pagan gods, the moral fault that the moderns find most characteristic of “first men”—and most reviling to contemporary norms—is their unreflective brutality. And just as the Moderns' critique of paganism is buttressed by the perceived superiority of contemporary rationalist philosophy and religious practice, so too the condemnation of ancient morality is supported by the perceived superiority of contemporary moral philosophy and social practices. That moral superiority is defined above all by a certain notion of refined politeness, encapsulated by the term “gallantry,” whose shining example renders ancient brutality all the more contemptible. Before turning to that ideal, though, we need to look at the Modern party's critique of ancient morality in and of itself.

In the eyes of the Moderns, such “virtues” as the ancients possessed are merely physical ones. As such they are principally negative virtues, in fact vices, serving only to impede the development of the more abstract and selfless qualities that define the highest morality. Perrault first makes

this argument in the 1674 prelude to the quarrel, the battle with Racine over Lully and Quinault's opera adaptation of Euripides' *Alcestis*. Perrault uses the occasion to mock all that he finds barbarous in the Greek original, as opposed to the modernized propriety and refined gallantry of the new opera. After attacking the "contemptible" and "revolting" ("méprisable," "haïssable"; *Critique* 90) behavior of Euripides's Admetus—who seems willing to allow his wife's suicide in order to assure his own survival—Perrault moves on to the other hero of the play, Heracles. He is especially shocked by a scene in which Heracles, in an intoxicated rage, violates the sacred rules of hospitality by insulting his host's manservant. What, Perrault asks, could possibly encourage a playwright to depict a celebrated hero as "a drunk and a brute" ("un ivrogne et un brutal"; *Critique* 91)? The answer lies in the primitive mores of the times:

It was perhaps permitted to the heroes of the ancients to be gluttons and drunks, particularly for heroes like Hercules, whose character was defined by strength of body and fearlessness of spirit, because these sorts of virtue are often accompanied by intemperance and brutality.

[I]l fu[t] peut-être permis aux héros des anciens, d'être gourmands et ivrognes, particulièrement aux héros tels qu'Hercule, dont le caractère consistait dans la force du corps et dans l'intrépidité de l'âme, parce que ces sortes de vertus sont souvent accompagnées de l'intempérance et de la brutalité. (*Critique* 91)

The fault lies here with the times. It is the very vitality of "strength of body" and "fearlessness of spirit"—those domains in which the ancients so excelled, according to Perrault—that creates such a deficit of higher, more abstract, and more self-abnegating qualities. More than a decade later, Perrault will rehearse the same claims in the *Parallèle*, frequently mocking the purely physical merits of the Homeric heroes, all the better to catalogue their moral faults. For Homer, "it suffices for a great general to have valor and swift feet, and [...] he is allowed to be unjust, brutal, pitiless, impious, and lawless" ("il suffit à un grand capitaine d'avoir de la valeur et les pieds bien légers, et [...] il lui est permis d'être injuste, brutal, impitoyable, sans foi, et sans loi"; 3:50).

Perrault's successors frequently echo this critique. For Terrasson, for example, Achilles is "essentially vicious" because he is all physical drive and appetite: "his valor is but ferocity and resides almost entirely in the strength and swiftness of his body" ("sa valeur n'est que férocité, et réside presque entièrement en la force et en la légèreté de son corps"; *Dissertation* 1:311). La Motte stresses not only the physicality but also the fundamen-

tal materiality of the values of Homeric Greece, where the high esteem allotted to concrete advantages has not yet been transcended by a higher sense of justice:

That age described as “heroic” will be seen to be the reign of the most base and unjust passions, and above all as the triumph of avarice. The generals are no less greedy for booty than the soldiers. The pillage of Troy is the greatest spur to the bravery of the Greeks, and Homer himself sometimes speaks of gold with a certain admiration that proves that the lack of luxury in his time was less the result of virtuous simplicity than of crudeness and ignorance.

[C]es temps qualifiés d’héroïques paraîtront le règne des passions les plus injustes et les plus basses, et surtout le triomphe de l’avarice. Les chefs ne sont pas moins avides de butin que les soldats. Le pillage de Troie est toujours le plus puissant aiguillon de la valeur des Grecs: et Homère lui-même parle quelquefois de l’or avec une certaine admiration, qui marque bien que le défaut de luxe venait moins, dans son temps, d’une simplicité vertueuse, que de grossièreté et d’ignorance. (*Discours* 42–43)

La Motte has two aims here. His first is to refute any claims that the primitive “simplicity” of the Homeric age is a golden age of innocent virtue. It is, instead, one of “crudeness and ignorance.” And his second is to reduce the poet to a simple representative of his time, one with no higher values than the “cruauté militaire” that drives his greedy and lusty warriors (*Discours* 33–34).¹ Hence,

Venus protects the perfidious Paris; Jupiter protects the unjust Achilles. Are these examples that encourage virtue in men? [...] Homer followed the ideas of his time and [...] he judged things the same way as his audience. He perhaps did not have the capacity to lift himself to truer and more just ideas; but that was also simply unnecessary for his aims. Vengeance and pride were at that time held in honor; [Homer] let them be so in his work; and his contemporaries were not shocked to see these vices depicted in such a way as to confirm their own judgment.

Vénus protège le perfide Pâris; Jupiter protège l’injuste Achille; sont-ce là des exemples qui encouragent les hommes à la vertu? [...] Homère a suivi les idées de son temps, et [...] il portait des choses les mêmes jugements que ses auditeurs. Il n’avait peut-être pas la force de s’élever à des idées plus justes; mais aussi n’était-il pas nécessaire pour son dessein. La vengeance et l’orgueil étaient en honneur; il les y a laissées[sic]; et son siècle

n'était point choqué de les voir représenter sous des traits qui confirmaient son jugement. (*Discours* 94–95)

What shocks us, La Motte asserts, did not shock the ancient Greeks. Yet he slyly suggests once again that it should have done so. Just as we have seen that the Greeks themselves should have been offended by their own gods (“even when putting oneself in the place of the pagans, one still finds everywhere subjects for scandal,” as La Motte remarked), so too the suggestion here is that a man of letters like Homer should have had the “capacity to lift himself” to higher ideas than those of his crude contemporaries. La Motte rhetorically claims not to know if Homer possessed that capacity, but the implication is that he did possess it, yet willfully chose not to use it. To better please his audience by indulging them in their favored vices, Homer refused to elevate himself above the rest. Innately capable of being better than his times, the poet is consequently a little worse. After all, he not only depicts the rampant vices of an unenlightened people without ameliorating or censuring them; he outright celebrates them.

The indictment is thus not just of ancient morals, but also of the ignoble role adopted by the ancient poet. Perrault likewise suggests at times that Homer gratuitously exaggerates the vices of an already vicious age.² But the indictment of Homer finds its most vehement prosecutor in Terrasson, whose 1715 application of geometric method to a literary critique of Homer leads to the devastating denunciation of the *Iliad*'s moral content. Terrasson characterizes Homer as nothing less than “a poet baleful for humankind” (“Poète funeste au genre humain”; *Dissertation* 1:296). While earlier myths featured barbarous heroes, such as Hercules or Theseus, who managed to at least do some good along the way, the *Iliad* was the first tale to celebrate an utterly vicious hero, Achilles, a figure with absolutely no redeeming features. For Terrasson, it is here that Homer proves radically inventive in the pursuit of iniquity: “Homer was the first to depict a hero who never once voluntarily did good for anyone [. . .]. In this matter, one cannot excuse Homer by recourse to the barbarity of his times” (“Homère a donné le premier un héros qui n’a jamais fait volontairement du bien à personne [. . .]. C’est ici qu’on ne saurait excuser Homère sur la grossièreté de son siècle”; 1:296).

Of course, Terrasson's claim that Homer is even worse than his times hardly serves to acquit a savage age that he excoriates in other passages. And whether Homer exceeded the general “barbarity of his times” or was simply representative of them, things have, for the Moderns, improved since. Indeed, Terrasson immediately follows this passage with praise (typical of the Modern preference for Virgil) for the more exemplary conduct

of Aeneas, the creation of a more enlightened if still ancient age, before moving on to celebrate the most perfect epic hero—the very recent one of Fénelon’s implicitly Christianized *Télémaque*. If we can thus conclude that for the Moderns ancient poets bear some particular responsibility for their works’ immorality, we also see that the primitive moral conditions of their time account for a large part of the shock of ancient poetry.

Moral Evolution

What, then, accounts for the positive evolution of morals since that barbarous moment? The threads of moral progress discerned by the Moderns are various. As I have suggested, some are primarily philosophical: they relate to advances in understanding the true moral nature of humankind. Others are social and political: they relate to the refinement of social relations that encourage more disinterested and polished behavior.

As for the progress of moral philosophy, the Moderns hail the advances that began even in ancient times. The advent of Christianity is one key element in this progress. As we have seen in the preceding pages, the Moderns debunk any moral value in paganism. Indeed, Perrault goes so far as to reject the entire humanist celebration of Greco-Roman “pagan virtue,” a tradition key to the freethinking philosophers of the first half of the seventeenth century, such as La Mothe Le Vayer, for whom morality is an affair of natural reason alone, and not of divine revelation.³ It is a paradigm that will have enormous influence on Enlightenment thinkers from Bayle forward. Nothing could, however, be further from Perrault’s conception of moral progress than this kind of “modern paganism.” For him, there can be no true pagan virtue, since the pagans know neither humility nor charity. If they make great claims to moral superiority, “it is that what they call virtue is only the appearance of virtue” (“C’est qu’on donne le nom de vertu à ce qui n’en a que l’apparence”; *Parallèle* 4:150). Only Christian thought can illuminate the true nature of man after the fall: “Believe me, only the Christian religion has produced a true system of morality” (“Croyez-moi, il n’y a que la religion chrétienne qui ait formé un véritable système de morale”; 4:144–5).⁴ Even a rigorously Modern rationalist like Terrasson, who claims to strictly apply the “geometrical” method to his critique, echoes Perrault with his stated preference for “la théologie morale” of Christians to that of “auteurs profanes” (*Dissertation* 1:294).

But for all their wariness regarding ancient “profane authors,” the Moderns, we have seen, also embrace a secular vision of progress that began its early course in pagan antiquity itself, and that thus contends at times with their Christian discourse. Even Perrault understands his debt

to Plato's *Republic* as the forerunner of all moral critiques of Homer. It is a debt that other Moderns do not hesitate to recognize. La Motte indeed vaunts his submission to the Greek philosopher, and urges his Ancient opponent Anne Dacier to better respect him:

In regard to morality, I have accused Homer of having no pure or firm ideas. [...] In vain I cover myself in the authority of Plato, who thought no better than I do of Homer's morals. Madame Dacier [is] without regard for the divine Plato.

J'ai accusé Homère de n'avoir pas eu de la morale des idées bien pures ni bien affirmées. [...] En vain je me couvre de l'autorité de Platon, qui ne pensait pas mieux que moi de la morale d'Homère. Mme Dacier [est] sans égard pour le divin Platon. (*Réflexions sur la critique*, in *Textes* 341).

La Motte's approval of Plato goes beyond the tactic perfected by Perrault and Fontenelle of sowing discord in the opposing camp by turning one ancient (Plato) against another (Homer). While La Motte is clearly delighted to praise Homer's banishment from the Republic, he finds in Plato something more: the first example of the advancement of philosophy over ignorance. I return here to La Motte's dark depiction of the Homeric age. It is but the first scene in a historical drama that will see the rise of enlightened thinking, and the renunciation, by at least a philosophical few, of heroic barbarity:

Vengeance and pride were then held in honor; [Homer] let them be so in his work; and his contemporaries were not shocked to see these vices depicted in such a way as to confirm their own judgment. Once light was shed on morals, once there appeared philosophers, then came the censuring of Homer. And though his reputation has since managed to withstand these critiques, it is not because of the correctness of his own judgments, but rather because of the prejudices of education founded on past praise, on pure applause, which, if one goes back to his first admirers, is mostly but a series of echoes of one another.

La vengeance et l'orgueil étaient en honneur; il les y a laissées[sic]; et son siècle n'était point choqué de les voir représenter sous des traits qui confirmaient son jugement. Dès que la morale s'est éclaircie, dès qu'il a paru des philosophes, on a vu des censures d'Homère; et quoique sa réputation se soit soutenue depuis ces censures, ce crédit ne vient pas de la vérité de ses jugements; et ce n'est qu'un préjugé d'éducation fondé sur des applau-

dissements, qui, à remonter jusqu'aux premiers suffrages, ne sont la plupart que des échos les uns des autres. (*Discours* 94–95)

The “philosophers” shed their “light,” poetry was subjected to critical thinking, yet the twin evils of unreflective admiration and pedagogic tradition continue to lurk in the love of Homer.⁵ In another passage in which La Motte celebrates the courage of the philosophers who were “the first to free themselves of the weight of the authority” of Homer, La Motte specifically indicts the backward-thinking Aristotle for his unphilosophical praise of the poet—praise that the Modern ascribes to Aristotle’s craven desire to “flatter” a young Alexander who worshipped Achilles (*Discours* 101–2).⁶ Of course, Aristotle was only the first of a long line of pedantic apologists. Despite the progress of reason, the poet’s “reputation” continues to hold sway today. So it is that a new generation of philosophers, like La Motte, must continue the march of enlightenment, and thus actively censure—or in the case of his revised *Iliad*, cleanse and correct—the primitive poet.



Despite all its insight, the philosophical vanguard (of which Aristotle was certainly not a member) lauded by La Motte cannot alone account for the tremendous moral improvement since antiquity. If La Motte’s audience—who value lively conversation and literary amusement above abstract moral reasoning—prefer less brutal and more refined heroes, it is due not just to the happy evolution of moral theory, but also to that of day-to-day social practice. The Moderns repeatedly affirm that the gradual refinement of manners—that is, the progress of sociability and politeness—has drastically improved human affairs. And the present moment was assuredly the culminating point in this long-term evolution. Few argued with Perrault’s claims that the age of Louis XIV was, in comparison to every civilization the world had seen, “the most polite and the most delicate of all” (“le plus poli et le plus délicat de tous”; *Parallèle* 2:276).

The Moderns may seem a bit smug here, but they were in fact reacting to an uncontested historical transformation in societal norms. (The Ancient partisans, as we will see, eagerly ceded the ground of politeness to the Moderns, preferring to vaunt instead the rougher simplicity of ancient times.) The elaboration of a civilization of manners in Renaissance Italy, exemplified by guidebooks to court refinement such as Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano*, reached a new pinnacle as the former feudal and warrior class of the aristocracy was domesticated under absolutism. Concurrently, the

urban bourgeoisie, often freed from everyday business concerns, increasingly mingled with the aristocracy while demonstrating its refined civility in the salons of Paris. There is considerable debate among historians as to whether this perceived apex of what Norbert Elias called the “civilizing process” owes more to the town or to the court, to the newly tamed nobility or to the rising bourgeoisie.⁷ What is not in doubt, however, is that this evolution concerned only a certain elite, whether aristocratic or bourgeois. Here again, the Moderns were keenly aware of the conditions around them, and thus made a point of frequently comparing the ancients’ rudeness to that of the contemporary peasantry, whose coarseness was apparently untouched by the evolution of the upper orders.⁸ The impoverished “simplicity” of antiquity survives today only in “the language of the children of humble people, of country townsmen, and of the ignorant” (“le discours des enfants du menu peuple, des villageois et des ignorants”; *Parallèle* 2:174). The Moderns were never accused of egalitarianism.

Gallantry, or The Hatchet and the Lyre

There is a trademark adjective that encapsulates the progress of sociability among the elite: *galant*. The capacious term encompasses the kind of refined civility, elegance of manners, and sophisticated understanding of human emotions that facilitate social harmony, and in particular harmony between the sexes. It arises in mid-seventeenth-century France as the hallmark of the new sociability; it quickly becomes a central battlefield in the brewing quarrel as the growing influence of *galanterie* is challenged by Ancient apologists such as Racine and Boileau. And by the end of the quarrel there is no doubt that it has come to represent, in terms of both literary and social practices, an essential cleavage between ancient and modern.

To understand how tightly bound are gallantry and modernity, consider the judgment of that ever-keen reader of the quarrel of the ancients and moderns, David Hume.⁹ His 1742 essay “Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences” perfectly sums up what was more or less the consensus on this issue:

If the superiority in politeness should be allowed to modern times, the modern notions of gallantry, the natural produce of courts and monarchies, will probably be assigned as the causes of this refinement. (“Of the Rise and Progress,” in *Standard of Taste* 89)

Despite the hypothetical “if,” Hume leaves little doubt that he does consider “modern notions of gallantry” a considerable advantage over past ages (even if, for the ever-skeptical philosopher who sympathized with

both the Ancient and Modern causes, “no advantages in this world are pure and unmixed”; 89). According to Hume’s uncontroversial definition, gallantry is born first and foremost of a certain domestication of heterosexual behavior, and in particular a “respect” and “deference” on the part of the male that “softens the affections of the sexes toward each other” (89). But the civilizing mission of gallantry goes well beyond the realm of sexual relations. It refines the very nature of language and, indeed, all “intercourse of minds” (90). Even more ambitiously, gallantry increases social harmony, extending the notion of deference to all partners in social exchange. Its precepts grant the privileges of the “highest civility,” not only to women, but to social inferiors, to the physically weak, and to unprotected “strangers and foreigners” (90).

Of course, such a broadly defined quality may sound less like a historically specific characteristic than a universal and timeless virtue. But for Hume—as for the seventeenth-century Modern champions that he echoes here—it is not. The “modern notions of gallantry” are just that: “modern.” They were largely unknown to the past, even to the most illustrious ages of classical antiquity. Indeed, the untamed directness of the ancients, what he calls their “rusticity [. . .], scurrility and obscenity,” “is quite shocking” to modern sensibilities (89, 86). Hume summarizes:

I shall [. . .] be bold to affirm that among the ancients, there was not much delicacy of breeding, or that polite deference and respect, which civility obliges us either to express or counterfeit toward the persons with whom we converse. (87)

The “polite deference” of gallantry requires a continual sacrifice of the self and its insatiable desire for precedence over others—whether that sacrifice be sincere or, as the wily Hume phrases it, convincingly “counterfeited.” This watchful self-discipline is not easily achieved in a primitive state of nature, nor in less developed societies such as those of remote antiquity, where men were “commonly proud and selfish, and apt to assume the preference above others” (90). Through the march of time and the evolution of refined royal “courts,” however, the “polite man learns to behave with deference towards his companions, and to yield the superiority to them in all the common incidents of society” (90). Hume’s identification of modernity with sociability is thus formulated through negative contrast: the moderns are the gallant, the nonmoderns the ungallant. The motto of the modern, Hume repeatedly affirms, is the polite concession of “*you* first!” In contradistinction, the self-asserting cry of “*me* first!” defines the nonmodern, those rejected from the contemporary civilized community as abhorrent ancients, detestable barbarians, or risible rustics.

Turning back to the quarrel, we find that Hume has perfectly rehearsed for us the key arguments developed by the earlier French Moderns. Perrault certainly led the charge, devoting a substantial amount of space in the *Parallèle* to *l'esprit galant*. In a passage devoted to its happy effect on language, he offers this broad definition of *galanterie*:

It includes all the refined and delicate ways with which one speaks of all things with free and pleasant gaiety; in a word, it is what distinguishes high society and cultivated persons from the populace; it began with Greek elegance and Roman urbanity, and it has been brought to a higher degree of perfection by the politeness of the most recent times.

Elle comprend toutes les manières fines et délicates dont on parle de toutes choses avec un enjouement libre et agréable; en un mot c'est ce qui distingue le beau monde et les honnêtes gens d'avec le menu peuple; ce que l'élégance grecque et l'urbanité romaine ont commencé, et que la politesse des derniers temps a porté à un plus haut degré de perfection. (3:286)

Here again, Perrault seems willing to cede to the ancients the first baby steps of progress, lauding "Greek elegance" and "Roman urbanity."¹⁰ Of course, his true intention is to damn the ancients with faint praise in order to better celebrate the modern world's triumphant march to a "higher degree of perfection." Indeed, in other passages Perrault, like Hume, sees the ancients not as forerunners in the continuous evolution of sociability, but as profoundly alien in this regard, almost of another species: "decency, civility, and deference for the fair sex [were] virtues almost unknown to the ancients" ("l'honnêteté, la civilité et la déférence pour le beau sexe, vertus presque inconnues aux anciens"; 2:33). The charge that gallantry was "unknown to all ancient authors" is frequently repeated in the *Parallèle*, and it is meant to hurt.¹¹

To return to Perrault's critique of Theocritus, the underlying scandal of the shepherd's slap (as well as of Homer's wife-beating gods) is now clear. Nothing could be more antithetical to the gallant spirit that crowns modernity. Perrault, it should be noted, marches here in perfect step with Fontenelle. The latter's 1688 *Discours sur la nature de l'éplogue* asserted that only a courteous, gallant shepherd could please a modern audience; the problem with Theocritus's shepherds is that they still seemed to exist in those primitive times when "the world had not yet had the leisure to polish itself."¹² And the "polishing" process is for Perrault clearly the result, at least in part, of the monarchical court society that defined contemporary French elite identity. Perrault perfectly anticipated Hume's argument that social gallantry is a "natural produce of courts and monarchies" and rarely

if ever advances under other regimes, least of all ancient republican ones. It is thus no accident that Perrault sets the witty conversational debate of the *Parallèle* at Versailles, whose palace and gardens are repeatedly praised as the ideal terrain, the *locus amoenus*, for polite social exchange. Nor is it any accident that the *Parallèle*'s most audacious and lively defender of the Moderns, working in league with the Abbé, should be an aristocratic "Chevalier," while the clumsy Ancient party spokesperson represents the less exalted and polished class of the magistrature. Gallant modernity is not an egalitarian affair; it is the exclusive mark of the elite "beau monde" circulating through Versailles and the salons of Paris, in stark contrast to the populace, doomed to live in a kind of eternal and benighted antiquity.

For Perrault, however, gallantry represents much more than a simple social distinction. He grants it the firm philosophical grounding that will be adopted by later thinkers such as Hume. Modern social practices, Perrault affirms, are made possible by modern moral principles and psychology.¹³ "These refinements [in gallant behavior] provide incontestable proof of the progress that has been made in the knowledge of this passion [i.e. love], and in consequence, the knowledge of all other passions" ("ces raffinements sont des preuves assurées du progrès qu'on a fait dans la connaissance de cette passion, et par conséquent dans la connaissance de toutes les autres passions"; *Parallèle* 2:33). In a stunning passage, Perrault crafts a parallel between the advances of modern physical sciences, such as astronomy and anatomy, and those of the moral sciences, in particular of what would later be called psychology:

Just as the ancients knew in general about the seven planets and the most visible stars, but not about the satellites of the planets and a great number of little stars that we have since discovered, so too they knew as we do in general about human passions, but they did not understand the little affections and little circumstances that accompany them, and which are like their satellites. It has only been in the most recent times that new and interesting discoveries have been made both in astronomy and in moral philosophy, as in a thousand other things. Just as the science of anatomy has found inside the heart certain valves, fibers, movements and symptoms that escaped the knowledge of the ancients, so has moral philosophy also uncovered in the heart certain inclinations, aversions, desires, and antipathies about which these same ancients knew nothing.

Comme les anciens connaissaient en gros aussi bien que nous les sept planètes, et les étoiles les plus remarquables, mais non pas les satellites des planètes, et un grand nombre de petits astres que nous avons découverts,

de même ils connaissaient en gros aussi bien que nous les passions de l'âme, mais non pas une infinité de petites affections et de petites circonstances qui les accompagnent, et qui en sont comme les satellites, ce n'a été que dans ces derniers temps que l'on a fait et dans l'astronomie et dans la morale, ainsi qu'en mille autres choses, ces belles et curieuses découvertes: En un mot, comme l'anatomie a trouvé dans le cœur des conduits, des valvules, des fibres, des mouvements et des symptômes qui ont échappé à la connaissance des anciens, la morale y a aussi trouvé des inclinations, des aversions, des désirs, et des dégoûts, que les mêmes anciens n'ont jamais connus. (2:29–30)

The claims of “galanterie raffinée” thus extend to the far corners of the “precise anatomy of the slightest emotions of the heart” (2:38). It is up to the social actor to put into practice this extensive body of moral research, applying to daily life the subtle knowledge of one's interlocutors' “inclinations, passions, desires, and antipathies.” So it is that Perrault compares the polite modern to a meticulous anatomist, figuratively dissecting his interlocutors with a fine scalpel in order to better adapt to their least inclinations, while the crude ancient goes at social commerce like a butcher with a conversational cleaver (2:37–38).

The gallant ideal thus has extensive moral reach. And for Perrault, as for Hume, the chief moral imperative at issue is that of the disciplined suppression of the self. Perrault's conception of gallant self-deferral is best illustrated in another of his ingenious parallels, this one not between cleavers and scalpels, but between hatchets and lyres:

Nothing better reveals the lack of politeness in the times of Alexander and of Augustus than the brutal manner in which love was handled. All the refinements that we have since discovered were then unknown, and you probably cannot find a single lover in all ancient literature who would admit to being too timid to declare his passion out of respect for, or out of fear of offending, the one he loved. A lover back then left the house with a good hatchet to knock down the door of his mistress if she did not answer promptly enough. That was the fashion then. Indeed, a hatchet was a more basic piece of equipment for a lover than a lyre [...]. Now can you deny that refinement, civility, and deference for the fair sex—virtues that were nearly unknown to the ancients and that have advanced so far among the moderns—are something fine and praiseworthy?

Rien ne marque davantage le peu de politesse des siècles d'Alexandre et d'Auguste que la manière brutale dont ils traitaient l'amour. Toutes les dé-

licatesses qu'on y a trouvées depuis leur étaient inconnues, vous ne trouverez peut-être pas un seul amant dans tous les livres des anciens qui dise n'avoir osé déclarer sa passion par respect, et de peur d'offenser celle qu'il aime. Un amant sortait le soir avec une bonne hache pour enfoncer la porte de sa maîtresse si elle ne la lui ouvrait pas assez promptement, c'était la mode, et même une hache était une pièce de l'équipage d'un amant plus essentielle qu'une lyre [...]. Est-ce que l'honnêteté, la civilité, et la déférence pour le beau sexe, vertus presque inconnues aux anciens, et qui ont été portées si loin par les modernes, ne sont pas quelque chose de beau et de louable? (2:32–33)

Unlike the ancient, wielding the hatchet of self-assertion, the modern carries only the lyre of deference: respect for the female demands either silence or artfully disguised pleading through sweet song. For Perrault, this basic act of submission to the beloved is the germ from which all other modes of social adaptation and self-restraint arise. Even in the modern world, the male who refuses the refining effects of female company reverts quickly to brutishness:

Look a bit closer at him who, a real werewolf,
Far from the fair sex lives hidden in his hole,
You'll find him filthy, clumsy, and savage,
Wild in his ways, rude in his speech.

Regarde un peu de près celui qui, loup garou
Loin du Sexe a vécu, renfermé dans son trou
Tu le verras crasseux, maladroit et sauvage
Farouche dans ses mœurs, rude dans son langage. (*Apologie des femmes* 7–8)

The modern “werewolf” is a stark reminder of the atavistic pull of ancient brutality. Hatchet-bearing ancients still lurk in the gardens of Versailles and the salons of Paris. In pursuing their anti-gallant crusade, these neo-ancients constitute something of a fifth column, subverting modern sociability from within.

By the time Perrault wrote the *Parallèle*, these putative reactionaries constituted a well-known and fundamentally ridiculous type. In the cultural imagination of Perrault's readers, the most common reference for this type would be found in Molière's already canonical comedies of two decades earlier. Perrault himself frequently nods to the playwright.¹⁴ A brief detour through Molière's comic menagerie of ungallant outsiders

will thus be useful. These stock characters, animated by an adherence to a vanished past, loudly reject contemporary social codes. Some are provincial outliers (George Dandin), others clumsy bourgeois egoists (Arnolphe or Sganarelle), and others scholarly pedants risibly clinging to the authority of ancient models. But the most complex and troublesome of Molière's antimoderns, Alceste, the half-comic, half-serious hero of *Le Misanthrope*, does not fit into such a neatly dismissible category. No other character so effectively (if still comically) rails against the modern "lyre" of sophisticated self-deferral, nor more effectively bears the "hatchet" of unmitigated self-expression. It is thus no surprise that Perrault wishes to link his fictional Ancient apologist in the *Parallèle*, the reactionary Président, to Alceste, as an illustrious forerunner in his lost cause. When the Président condemns modern notions of gallantry, the Chevalier compares him to Molière's hero in the celebrated scene in which Alceste attacks the false sophistication of a peer's sonnet and expresses his preference for the cruder expressions of passion found in an old ballad. And just in case the Président foolishly thinks himself flattered by being identified with one of Molière's most famous characters, the Modern partisan Abbé reminds him that the misanthropic Alceste was a deeply flawed and fundamentally ridiculous character. Far from endorsing his anti-gallant stand, Perrault asserts, Molière penned his play in order to mock his hero.¹⁵ Perrault is careful to place France's most prestigious comic playwright on the side of modern sociability here: Molière is ridiculing Alceste's refusal to soften his violent outbursts and to defer to others' sensibilities, as contemporary codes rightly require (3:289).

Perrault's consignment of Alceste to the Ancient cause leaves a rich legacy for the next century as it untangles the issues of the quarrel. Most importantly, Perrault prepares the terrain here for Rousseau, who, in one of his more Ancient partisan moments (and I will later suggest he also had many Modern-leaning ones), follows the Président's lead by identifying himself fully with Alceste's character and with his refusal to bow down to social gallantry. The 1758 *Lettre à d'Alembert* praises Alceste as the lone outsider, the melancholic "werewolf" (as Perrault would say), who rejects the "counterfeited" (as Hume would say) playacting of modern gallantry. Rousseau, the great champion of deep interiority, the devotee of ancient republican self-reliance, sees in Alceste the single man ready to combat the artifice of contemporary life. And, despite what respect he may have elsewhere for Molière, Rousseau disapprovingly identifies the playwright as a polite "modern," placing him in the camp of the gallant audience upon whose approval he depends for applause.

Modern Feminism?

One more scene from Molière bears consideration here, since it sheds some light on key gender issues raised by modern “gallantry.” I return to that zippy formula from the 1673 *Le malade imaginaire*: “The ancients, sir, are the ancients, and we are the people of today.” Adding to its resonance is the fact that the play premiered at the same 1674 fêtes at Versailles that saw the outbreak of a pre-quarrel skirmish over Euripides’ *Alcestis* that pitted Perrault against Racine.¹⁶ And at the center of that polemical exchange, we have seen, is the question of gallantry, with Perrault mocking the ancient heroes’ “brutalité” and their shocking lack of deference to women (*Critique* 89–91). If we now look more closely at the dramatic context of Angélique’s formula in *Le malade imaginaire*, we find that the “modern notions of gallantry” are also at the heart of this particular little dramatic exchange. In the scene, Angélique must respond to the unwanted marriage proposal of a certain young Diafoirus, a dull and bookish university student who is favored by her tyrannical father and whose graceless Latin name reveals all.¹⁷ As he ludicrously vies for the affections of the elegant heroine against his rival—an up-to-date, sociable young man—he uses, in ancient style, the direct attack:

Angélique: [...] Marriage is a bond to which one must never subject a heart by force; and if Monsieur is a civilized gentleman, he will never accept a person whom he gained only by constraint [...]. To do violence to someone is a villainous way to make oneself loved.

Diafoirus: We read in the ancients, Mademoiselle, that the custom then was to take by force from their father’s house the girls they were to marry, so that it would appear that it was against their will that they flew off in the arms of a man.

Angélique: The ancients, sir, are the ancients, and we are the people of today.

Angélique: [...] Le mariage est une chaîne où l’on ne doit jamais soumettre un cœur par force; et si Monsieur est honnête homme, il ne doit point vouloir accepter une personne qui serait à lui par contrainte [...]. C’est un méchant moyen de se faire aimer de quelqu’un que de lui faire violence.

Diafoirus: Nous lisons des anciens, Mademoiselle, que leur coutume était d’enlever par force de la maison des pères les filles qu’on menait marier, afin qu’il ne semblât pas que ce fût de leur consentement qu’elles convoaient dans les bras d’un homme.

Angélique: Les anciens, Monsieur, sont les anciens, et nous sommes les gens de maintenant. (Act 2, sc. 6, in Molière, *OC* 2:1140–41)

Diafoirus's threat of abduction cannot but recall Perrault's caricature of the ancient hatchet-bearing lover who breaks down doors. The resonance with Perrault's remark is even stronger here when we consider that Diafoirus's gallant rival, the one naturally preferred by Angélique, enters the stage disguised as a music teacher. He is the lyre to Diaforus's hatchet. And like Perrault's opposition between violent abduction and circumlocutory lyrics, between ancient self-assertion and modern deference, Angélique's quip also deploys a profoundly exclusive definition of modern self-identity. "We are the people of today"; "today" is the time of gallant refinement; and those who reject its precepts are not "us," they are "them." Perrault would seem in 1674 to have cribbed his criticism of the ancients from Angélique when he remarks that the "très vilaine" conduct of Euripides' hero Admetus toward his wife was "fine and well among the ancients, but is certainly not to the taste of our century" ("bonne chez les anciens; mais n'est pas assurément au goût de notre siècle"; *Critique* 90). The ancients are the ancients and we are the people of today, and the difference lies in the codes regulating heterosexual conduct, especially those guaranteeing women protection from male violence.

Does this make the Modern party a feminist party? It has certainly been argued that it was. Joan DeJean, for example, views the quarrel of the ancients and moderns as "a continuation of the *Querelle des femmes*," and leaves no doubt that she considers the Moderns, with their defense of "women's role in the creation of literary modernity," as the feminist party (*Ancients* 167).¹⁸ There is no doubt that Perrault saw himself as defending the cause of women. But just what was the nature of that cause? What kind of feminism did Perrault embrace? It is safe to say that it was hardly the radical kind, based on the fundamental equality of the sexes, which was being formulated at the time, most famously by Poulain de la Barre. (Though that emerging theory of gender equality was indebted to modern Cartesian rationalism, it was also wary of theories of progress, and sensitive to notions of greater gender equality in older, more primitive, societies.)¹⁹

Perrault's feminism was of a very different sort. What the Modern leader praises in what he generally calls the "fair sex" is just that: a gentle disposition, a softness, even a fundamental weakness, by comparison to men. Therein lies women's virtue, for their gentleness inevitably curbs the natural ferocity of men who pay proper attention to them. For Perrault, it is only in the company of women that men develop "exact politeness, elegance, good taste, and refinement."²⁰ The absence of women is fatal to

men's moral and social development, allowing them to revert to their ancestral "werewolf" nature. Perrault's conception of female "submission" is thus profoundly traditional.²¹ What is more interesting is his promotion of this pliable virtue not just for women, but also for men. He hopes that, through proper social exchange, female softness will prove contagious, and gently spread its influence to their male admirers. Heterosexual relations lie at the core of this fertilization of male civility and self-deferral. But that is just a first step. The larger nonsexual interactions between the sexes—those heterosocial spaces typical of court and salon society—permit a further extension of the domain of sociability.

For Perrault, then, the essential virtue of women is a civilizing one, and its chief beneficiary is the male sex. In this sense, Perrault's vision of gallant heterosexuality is deeply indebted to the medieval chivalric code of *courtoisie* and its domestication of the warrior through an idealization of love. In such a code, women are valued above all for gentleness, purity and fidelity. And these are the very qualities that Perrault celebrates in *Griselidis*, his exemplary short story in verse, which tells of a woman whose unrelenting and masochistic "submission" to a tyrannical husband (whose cruelty she obediently attributes to a disciplinary "paternal goodness") illustrates Perrault's idea of the "beautiful virtue so fitting for the fair sex."²²

Yet, even if Perrault's feminism is at base a traditional apology for "feminine" virtues, it could still challenge some ingrained notions of the time. Given the theories, then still current, of women's essential libidinal and inconstant nature, Perrault could legitimately see himself as defending women, as he repeatedly claimed. And even if one cringes at his call for self-censorship of the classics, his unbowed critique of the shepherd's slap is a call to arms that opens a provocative debate on the social effects of literature. The Modern conception of a feminine civilizing force, however, leaves no real room for other, more "masculine" qualities, such as vengeful honor or ferocious conquest, which women might also wish to claim as their own. And we will see that the Ancients will make this claim for the less supine heroines of the classics.

To understand the limits of Perrault's feminism, consider his attack on Boileau. Here we enter into a yet another episode of the centuries-old *querelle des femmes*, one that broke out in 1694 when, in his "Satire X," Boileau rehashed the misogynist tirades of Juvenal and Rabelais. Perrault promptly and indignantly responded with his own *Apologie des femmes*. We have already seen how this poem establishes women as the source of politeness; it can now be added that the womanless "werewolf" to whom Perrault refers is no doubt intended to be Boileau. As the title indicates, Perrault sets out

to defend the reputation of women, but he immediately takes the offensive. The attack is fierce. He accuses Boileau, with his servile aping of ancient misogynists, of having “railed against women in a scandalous manner” (“déclamé contre les femmes d’une manière scandaleuse”; preface to *Apologie*, n.p.). But just what is the scandal so offensive to women? It lies above all in the obscenity of Boileau’s “words that offend modesty and decency” (“des termes qui blessent la pudeur”; *ibid.*). Perrault’s defense of women thus hardly qualifies as a radical treatise in favor of gender equality. It is instead a quite traditional plea for the strictest decorum, for “good morals” (“les bonnes mœurs”) and for “public decency” (“l’honnêteté publique”; *ibid.*)—that is to say, for all the modern civilizing codes that women supposedly enforce. Perrault is doing nothing extraordinary here. Male writers of the seventeenth century frequently claimed to censor the graphic violence and crudeness of the ancients solely to comfort female sensibilities—and to avoid the gallant indignation of their male champions: such was Corneille’s famous justification for excising from his adaptation of *Œdipus* the spectacle of bloodied eye sockets too shocking for women’s “delicacy.”²³ It is no surprise then that Perrault’s most forceful objection to Boileau would be a matter of mere lexical propriety, a denunciation of what he call the “dirty words” that rightly scandalize women.²⁴

Perrault’s strategy here reminds us of the fundamentally literary nature of the quarrel, including what might at first appear to be its more sweeping feminist ramifications. Indeed, throughout the quarrel, Modern apologists regularly used the charge of “obscenity” against ancient literature. Perrault, we have seen, seethes at the “filth” of antiquity; La Motte wonders how Homer would allow Zeus to call Hera a “bitch.” In short, French modernity was defined by propriety; that propriety was heterosocial and heterosexual. All who failed to conform to its norms were alien to its spirit, be they Homeric brutes, rustic peasants, or homosocial werewolves disguised as Ancient apologists.²⁵

9 * The Ancients Respond

Faced with the scandal of ancient morals, religion, and politics, the defenders of the classics often retreat from such troubling social and theological issues and take refuge within the safer confines of literary principles. Anne Dacier's stark differentiation between the demands of "good poetry" and those of "good politics" defines the strategy:

The aim of poetry is to imitate, and its imitation can be [as] vicious in regard to good politics, as it is excellent in regard to good poetry.

Le but de la poésie est d'imiter, et son imitation pourrait être [aussi] vicieuse en bonne politique, qu'elle serait excellente en bonne poésie.
(*L'Iliade*, xxiii)

Dacier's argument is simple. Great poets are realists. They first and foremost obey a single artistic injunction: to portray humans as they lived in their own time, shocking as that may be to future ages. This is indeed the first principle of the Ancient party, so to speak, its axiomatic position, beginning with Racine's influential defense of his 1667 *Andromaque*, where he claims that tragedy must depict heroes "as they are" rather than how they should be. And that position only hardens as the quarrel progresses. Thus Dacier's contemporary Jean Boivin boldly replies to the Moderns' demand for moral propriety and exemplarity by asserting the fundamental separation between ethics and aesthetics. The only viable criterion for judging literary works is their historical accuracy in representing the *mores* of their age.

It is not a matter of determining whether the manners and morals that Homer depicts are good or bad, but simply of determining whether in his time, or in the time of the Trojan war, the manners and morals were as he depicted them, that is, whether he depicted them just as they were at the time.

Il ne s'agit pas de savoir si les mœurs qu'Homère peint, sont bonnes ou mauvaises, mais seulement, si de son temps, ou du temps de la guerre de Troie, les mœurs étaient telles qu'il les a peintes, et s'il les a bien représentées telles qu'elles étaient alors. (*Apologie* 65)

We will later see to what effect this line of defense is employed in elaborating new conceptions of the autonomy of literature. Yet even though the quarrel is waged primarily on literary and aesthetic grounds, no one—not even the most ardent of Ancient apologists—can effectively confront the shock of the ancient world while entirely skirting the social and philosophical terrain claimed by the Moderns. At the end of the day, the Ancients must respond to this prickly question: can the portrayal of absolutely any action, no matter how barbaric or sacrilegious it may appear to modern readers, be justified in poetry under the name of poetic mimesis alone? Are there no bounds to the faithful imitation of life? Given the difficulty of responding affirmatively to this question in the age of triumphant decorum, the Ancients were motivated, indeed obliged, to move at times beyond the purely literary argument and formulate some manner of defense for the ancient world portrayed in the classics. Their hand was forced, and they had to turn from the representation to the represented, from the art of the depiction to the reality of the matter depicted.

Collective Narcissism versus Temporal Cosmopolitanism

In order to justify the most shocking features of antiquity, its defenders frequently adopted a form of relativism, or as I earlier suggested, of cultural pluralism. We can now explore the broader implications of the historical sensibility they embraced. Ancient apologists argued that the only true way to appreciate ancient literature is to appreciate cultural difference. To topple the tyranny of decorum, the Ancients did not hesitate to question the solidity of the modern norms and ideals that underpin it. In 1687 Longepierre, addressing how readers might overcome their distaste for the ancient world, adumbrates the argument that the Ancients will follow:

[One must] go back [...] to the most distant antiquity. [...] For one must not believe that ideas of verisimilitude and decorum are the same in all

ages. Must one not recognize that some of these ideas are founded on customs, on attitudes, on religion, etc., and that our own age is a very poor measure by which to judge conventions of decorum, which rest on foundations so unstable and subject to change? What a strange blindness, what unfair and inverted logic, to want to bring everything back to one's own time without ever allowing oneself to lose sight of it for one moment!

[Il faut] remonter [...] jusqu'à cette Antiquité la plus éloignée. [...] Car enfin il ne faut point se persuader que l'idée du vraisemblable et des bienséances soit une en tous les temps. Ne doit-on pas savoir qu'il y en a de fondées sur les coutumes, sur les opinions, sur la religion, etc. et que notre siècle est une très mauvaise règle pour juger de ces sortes de bienséances appuyées sur des fondements si peu stables, et si sujets par conséquent à changer? Quel étrange entêtement, quel renversement injuste de vouloir tout ramener à son siècle, sans pouvoir se résoudre à le perdre un seul moment de vue! (*Discours* 95–96)

Longepierre goes beyond a simple plea to accept literary representations of other ages; he demands a certain respect for those ages in and of themselves. Regarding the mutability of cultures through time, Longepierre firmly posits that historically variable and “unstable” foundations determine social customs. More audaciously, he asserts that these same unstable foundations arbitrarily gird the most fundamental philosophical or moral principles. Indeed “religion” itself (or at least its moral application in daily life) is here relegated to a historically conditioned practice, one that Longepierre dares to assert cannot be judged by modern Christian norms, which offer no reliable “measure” against which to evaluate pagan beliefs.

Longepierre works here from a tradition of tolerance and moral skepticism with strong roots (as we have seen) in Montaigne, as well as in the essayist's freethinking descendants, such as La Mothe Le Vayer, in the first half of the seventeenth century. However, Longepierre enriches this apology for tolerance and pluralism by means of an interesting detour through the “moralist” writing of the middle and later part of the century. He is in particular indebted to neo-Augustinian reflections on the profound nature of human vanity and self-love, or *amour-propre*, as most incisively analyzed by Pascal and La Rochefoucauld. The last lines in the passage above regarding the collective vanity of modern French readers, whose ability to “view” others is blocked by their obsessive self-regard, offer a hint of Longepierre's debt to the *moralistes*. But what Pascal and La Rochefoucauld had framed as a vice of the human heart becomes here a vice of the national spirit. What narcissism is to the individual, presentism and ethno-

centrism are to society. Longepierre turns a moral discourse into a cultural critique. He thereby explicitly adapts the critique of *amour-propre* to his cause, denouncing the double-edged “pernicious and blind injustice” consisting in “the passion of lifting oneself above everything else, by lifting one’s own century above all others.”¹ His conclusion: “To be unable to lose sight of one’s time is the result of a completely blind self-love and an extremely narrow mind” (“ne pouvoir perdre son siècle de vue est le fruit d’un amour-propre entièrement aveugle et d’un génie extrêmement borné”; 100).²

Longepierre’s comparison between individual and collective narcissism will be frequently exploited in the following decades by the Ancient party. It has probably been illustrated most colorfully by Anne Dacier, who extends the parallel to that between a preening coquette and conceited modernity, both equally deluded by self-love. We have earlier seen Dacier’s declaration of her attraction to the foreignness of antiquity; we can now appreciate the moral context for that preference. It is a sign of her personal victory over the temptations of modern vainglory and collective *amour-propre*; it is a trophy of her temporal humility, her historicist charity:

That a women would like a painter to paint her as more beautiful than she is, even if it means keeping none of her own features, I understand the reasons for such a deception: she wants to fool those who have never seen her. On the other hand, I must admit that it is a kind of vanity (*amour-propre*) I cannot understand to want past ages, which have nothing to do with us, to somehow resemble us, to look like us. As for me, I think in a completely different manner, and I find these ancient times all the more beautiful in that they so little resemble our own.

Qu’une femme veuille qu’un peintre la peigne plus belle, quand même il ne conserverait aucun de ses traits, je conçois les raisons de cette fausseté, elle veut tromper ceux qui ne l’auront jamais vue; mais de vouloir que des temps, qui ne nous touchent en rien, nous ressemblent, j’avoue qu’il y a là une sorte d’amour-propre que je ne conçois point. Pour moi je pense tout autrement, et je trouve ces temps anciens d’autant plus beaux, qu’ils ressemblent moins au nôtre. (*L’Iliade*, xxv)

As Dacier’s lines suggest, for Ancient apologists the subterranean calculations of collective, temporal self-love are as entrenched and mysterious as those of the ever-desiring ego examined by Pascal. Like all *amour-propre*, modernity’s love of itself operates deeply and covertly; it masks its insatiable desire for glory by automatically diminishing all rivals. Presentism, as Longepierre suggested, is less a considered position than an unthinking

“passion” resembling jealousy. In short, it is more reflexive than reflective. And like Pascal’s or Hobbes’s core human vanity, it is a powerful driver of injustice and inequity. Thus, according to Boivin, the visceral resistance to antiquity—to what Perrault called its “unbearable” difference from modernity—results from nothing less than

the injustice of readers, who, relating everything to the manners of their time, to the tastes and the ideas of their country, can bear nothing that is not in total conformity to their prejudices.

l’injustice des lecteurs, qui rappelant tout aux mœurs de leur siècle, au goût et aux idées de leur pays, ne peuvent rien souffrir qui ne soit conforme à leurs préjugés. (*Apologie* 12)³

So much for the Ancient party’s psychological analysis of Modern prejudices. Ancient partisans, however, do not aim merely to penetrate these prejudices’ hidden depth; they also seek to expose their vast and extensive breadth. Thus Boivin argues that the Moderns’ aversion to remote cultures of the past is indicative of a much broader intolerance, which extends to foreign cultures of the present day. Difference in time and difference in place inevitably provoke the same unease. In equating historical and geographical diversity, Boivin once again activates the parallel—one that we have seen drawn by Racine and Saint-Evremond—between Greco-Roman antiquity and modern Asia. Here Boivin suggests that those chauvinists who wish to have antiquity cleaned up for modern tastes would, when given the occasion, do similar violence to the contemporary East:

To be unable to tolerate in men of another century, or of another country far from our own, manners and morals different from those of men of the present century or of the country we live in, is to be unable to tolerate a foreign appearance in a foreigner; it is to want a Turk, an Indian, or a Chinese to think and act like us and to have none of the flaws of their nation and all the virtues of our own. As for me, what I like in the Chinese are Chinese manners and ways; and I would be most displeased with a painter who, promising to make me a portrait of the Chinese emperor, painted him dressed up as a Frenchman.

Ne pouvoir souffrir dans les hommes d’un siècle ou d’un pays éloigné du nôtre, un caractère différent de celui des hommes du siècle présent, ou du pays où nous vivons, c’est ne pouvoir souffrir l’air étranger dans un étranger; c’est vouloir qu’un Turc, un Indien, un Chinois pensent et agissent comme nous, n’aient aucun des défauts de leur nation, et aient toutes

les vertus de la nôtre. Pour moi ce qui me plaît dans un Chinois, c'est l'air chinois, ce sont les manières chinoises: et je saurais très mauvais gré à un peintre, qui s'étant engagé à me faire le portrait de l'empereur de la Chine, me l'aurait peint habillé à la française. (47)

The taste for aesthetic variety and novelty (the portrait of the Chinese emperor exotically dressed) is, for Boivin, tightly bound with a more profound taste for cultural and moral diversity (for the *caractère* of the actual Chinese). Literary and cultural pluralism are thus wed, as are antiquity and Orient.⁴ Furthermore, Boivin's denunciation of national chauvinism anticipates some of the favored tactics of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. The sarcasm of Boivin's references to "all the virtues of our own" nation and all "the flaws of theirs" cruelly mocks the bigoted complacency he finds in those who admire all things French and disdain all things ancient—or Asian. It is an ironic play of perspectives that Montesquieu will perfect six years later in his *Persian Letters*.

The Counterculture of Antiquity?

It must be admitted, however, that the almost instinctive pleasure that Ancient apologists took in cultural difference sometimes exceeds the bounds of cool-headed cosmopolitanism or skeptical relativism. Indeed, rather than simply positing an impartial openness to all cultures, Ancient partisans at times passionately praised a specific culture of the past. Simply put, they did not always practice the historicist equity they preached. Just like their Modern counterparts, they too were conflicted. They too developed sometimes contending hot and cool approaches: the cool Ancient approach being one of impartial, even pluralistic, tolerance; the hot Ancient approach being one of a visceral preference for the past, and a distaste for the present. As I have noted, this disdain for the present was certainly less pronounced than the Moderns' aversion to the past: the Ancient partisans were generally fully ensconced in the contemporary world, and determined to please a modern audience pleased with itself. Nevertheless, in their more fervid moments, certain Ancient partisans turned the defense of ancient literature into a militant critique, not simply of modern cultural arrogance, but of modern France itself. They sometimes attacked not just presentism, but also the present. Antiquity, remote and shocking, became in these moments an attractive counterculture.

This passion for antiquity most often expressed itself, if still quite hesitantly, as a form of primitivism. As we have seen, the arguments in the

quarrel turned increasingly to the preclassical world, in particular to the Greece of Homer. And if that world was sometimes still lauded, in old-fashioned humanist style, as one not yet corrupted by luxury, pomp, and empty etiquette, it was never conceived of as a dreamily happy age of untainted innocence, flowing justice, and mellow fertility. To reprise a distinction formulated by Lovejoy and Boas, the primitivism embraced by Ancient apologists was a “hard” primitivism, not a “soft” one (*Primitivism* 10–12). The Homeric age as the Ancients viewed it was no Eden. In its rude simplicity and violent struggles, it was more akin to Tacitus’s heroically barbarous Germany than to Ovid’s soft and easy golden age.

To gauge both the power—and the very real limitations—of the Ancients’ flirtation with primitivism, I return to the three scandals of antiquity decried by the Moderns. Some distinctions will thereby become evident: the moral dimensions of antiquity, though rich in abstract primitivist appeal, had very limited application to modern daily life; the political ones, on the other hand, were increasingly tantalizing as the quarrel progressed, and proved the most promising for the nascent eighteenth century; finally, matters of religion were undoubtedly the most vexing, giving fruit to more aesthetic than theological reformulations.



In regard to the moral countermodel of antiquity, I have already suggested that its defenders frequently lauded the simplicity of ancient times by contrasting it to that defining feature of modern refinement: gallantry. But the Ancient defense of ungallant, barbarous behavior proved (when not simply echoing notions of moral relativity) to be a largely literary argument. The gallantry typical of current novels or pastorals was, in their eyes, stultifyingly soft and sweet. We would call it kitsch. Ancient apologists were thus less concerned with moral corruption than with literary banality, troubled less by vice than by dullness. The “lyre” of modern politeness might make daily bourgeois life a more kind and pleasant existence; it was, however, deadly for the passions necessary to great literary works, particularly to tragedy and epic. It is a position that Racine staked out for the Ancients in his 1667 defense of *Andromaque* by contrasting the tragic perversity of Pyrrhus with the sweetness of the heroes of modern romances, typified by the most gallant of shepherds, Celadon:

Still some people have complained that [Pyrrhus] rages at Andromache and that he wants to marry this captive [princess] at any cost. I admit that

he is not properly resigned to his mistress, and that Celadon better understood perfect love. But what can I do? Pyrrhus had not read our novels. He was violent by nature. And all heroes are not made to be Celadons.

Encore s'est-il trouvé des gens qui se sont plaints [que Pyrrhus] s'emportât contre Andromaque, et qu'il voulût épouser cette captive à quelque prix que ce fût. J'avoue qu'il n'est pas assez résigné à la volonté de sa maîtresse, et que Céladon a mieux connu que lui le parfait Amour. Mais que faire? Pyrrhus n'avait pas lu nos romans. Il était violent de son naturel. Et tous les héros ne sont pas faits pour être des Céladon. (*OC I*, 197)

It is safe to assume that Racine is not offering here an ethical justification for Pyrrhus's strategy of threatening the life of his beloved's child in order to force her submission. No, Racine's argument is poetic, based on the demands of tragic pathos: he refuses to "reform all the heroes of antiquity in order to turn them into perfect heroes" ("réform[er] tous les héros de l'Antiquité, pour en faire des héros parfaits"; *I*, 197). As for the reform of society, either ancient or modern, Racine is silent.

Boileau generally maintains the same purely literary perspective in his most sustained attack on modern *galanterie*: the 1660s *Dialogue des héros de roman*.⁵ However, he also offers here his most provocative response to the supposed feminist implications of modern sociability. In this satirical fantasy, the ersatz Greek and Roman heroes of contemporary novels and plays, thoroughly sanitized and sweetened by such "gallant" authors as Madeleine de Scudéry or Philippe Quinault, are hauled before Minos and Pluto to be judged for the shameful loss of their ancient heroic fierceness and grandeur.⁶ What is perhaps most interesting is that a good half of Boileau's ancient "heroes" are in fact *heroines*. Whatever misogyny we might find elsewhere in Boileau (and we surely find some), he paradoxically takes this occasion to praise the undomesticated defiance, even the gory cruelty, of antiquity's famed women. Indeed, in his distaste for the *roman galant* and what we might call its hyperfeminized female characters, Boileau goes so far as to praise ancient heroines' murderous violence against men. When, for example, the once ferocious Tomyris is summoned before Pluto, the king of the underworld eagerly awaits a display of her feminine virility: "What, this savage queen of the Massagetae who had the head of Cyrus plunged into a bowl of human blood? She at least will not be sobbing like the others, I can assure you of that!" ("Quoi? Cette reine sauvage des Massagètes qui fit plonger la tête de Cyrus dans un vaisseau de sang humain? Celle-ci ne pleurera pas, j'en répons"; *OC* 458). But of course, it is precisely to a soft, weepy lover that her character has now been reduced by her Modern

adaptor, Quinault. "Alas, how sickly sweet she has become!" bemoans Minos (459). The same sorry transformation has equally enfeebled the other once splendidly "bloody," and "wild" women hauled before the infernal court, including Clelia, Lucretia, and Joan of Arc, all of whom have traded in their dazzling rebellious temerity for dull modern tenderness (466).

In many ways, Boileau's celebration of indomitable women continues a tradition of the military *femme forte*, a figure deeply problematic for absolutist culture and its ideals of refined manners and domesticated nobility. But his taste for feminine ferocity, like Racine's for Homeric rage, is driven by literary rather than social considerations. If the Moderns' feminism was a carefully circumscribed traditionalist one, the Ancients' was an equally circumscribed aesthetic one. Boileau seeks not to transpose ancient female aggression into the reality of modern gender relations, but to transport the modern reader into the imaginary realm of ancient heroic sublimity. Boileau condemns soft and tender *literary* characters, not the actual courtiers and Parisians whose manners they imitate. The *galanterie* that irks when diminishing tragic or epic fierceness is, in contrast, perfectly appropriate in the gardens of Versailles or the urban salons.

Of course, Boileau, satirist that he was, did sometimes deride the very real social hypocrisies of modern refinement; in his later career, he even fell into something of a reactionary outrage at modern manners, particularly in his final moralizing satires.⁷ But the ancient world, with its multiple concubines, seductive ephebes, and scheming divorcés, was hardly proposed as a moral countermodel (though its brutal honesty and witty cynicism regarding its vices were at times appealing). And even the Ancient apologist who proved to be the most adamant in denouncing modern decadence, Anne Dacier, generally aimed her sharpest arrows at the current "corruption of *taste*" (as she titled her work) and not at the corruption of manners and morals. Indeed, Dacier, so zealous in defending the brutality of Homeric heroes, was herself well known, as we have seen, as an elegant and polite conversationalist, perfectly at home in the most fashionable salons.⁸ In short the Ancient partisans were more or less happily people of their day. They were hardly ready for the austere retreats from modernity that later attracted a Rousseau, still less for the Phrygian dress and rebellious beards borne by the radical primitivists at the end of the eighteenth century.⁹



If the moral countermodel of antiquity during the quarrel proves largely abstract, the political one will prove somewhat more concrete. The politi-

cal and moral domains, however, cannot always be so easily distinguished. How do they interrelate? As regards antiquity, the general coarseness of its customs is frequently viewed as intimately bound with a fierce, and politically charged, resistance to all forms of submission. As regards modernity, the deferential acquiescence of contemporary gallantry can, in parallel, easily be viewed as symptomatic of a craven servility to all forms of hierarchy, even to the most arbitrary exercise of power. An example will illustrate. In his *Art poétique*, Boileau once again castigates modern novelists for their softening of ancient *mores*:

Study the manners of varying countries and times;
Differing humors result from differing climes.
Be careful never to give, as in *Clélie*,
A French air and spirit to ancient Italy,
And never, under Roman names, to render
Cato gallant nor Brutus softly tender.

Des siècles, des pays, étudiez les mœurs.
Les climats font souvent les diverses humeurs.
Gardez donc de donner, ainsi que dans *Clélie*,
L'air, ni l'esprit français à l'antique Italie,
Et sous des noms romains faisant votre portrait,
Peindre Caton galant et Brutus dameret. (*Art poétique* III, in *OC* 171)

Boileau expands upon the critique of modern gallantry adumbrated in the *Dialogue*; he furthermore couches his argument here in a typical Ancient party homage to cultural diversity (adopting the paradigm of varying “climates” that Montesquieu will later perfect).¹⁰ Of course, Boileau’s recommended “study” of that diversity is primarily aimed at producing realistic literary effect (portraying the foreignness of antiquity as it was), rather than at achieving some lofty moral edification or enhanced ethnographic understanding. Yet Boileau’s keen choice of examples—Cato and Brutus, two of the most intransigent defenders of a fierce Roman republican spirit—is revelatory of his admiration (at least in the sense of awe, if not approbation) for ancient indomitability, as well as of his real hesitancy concerning the universal claims of modern monarchy.

This hesitancy is largely a cautious diffidence, and not an open resistance, regarding the claims of absolutism. As pointed out earlier, Boileau himself was a court-appointed historiographer whose mission was to glorify Louis. He performed it well. Yet we have also seen that, unlike his Modern opponents, Boileau refuses to be “offended” at ancient rebels’ insubordination to monarchical power, just as he resists ranking Louis XIV

superior to ancient heroes, and declines to laud such contemporary authoritarian acts as the regime's suppression of Protestantism. Boileau is here typical of his Ancient allies. La Fontaine, when briefly joining the quarrel, showed similar reserve in his measured praise of the king.¹¹ Longepierre does not hesitate to criticize the Modern party for "having pushed their zeal too far" in their hyperbolic panegyrics to Louis.¹² La Bruyère goes yet a step further in his *Discours sur Théophraste*. Not only does he avoid encomia to Louis XIV, but his praise of ancient moral simplicity veers decidedly, though still allusively, toward biting criticism of the contemporary regime. Among the ancient Greeks,

nature showed itself in them with all its purity and dignity, and was not yet spoiled by vanity, luxury, and foolish ambition. A man was honored on this earth for his strength and virtue alone; one was not made rich by means of court positions or pensions, but simply by one's fields, flocks, children, and servants.

La nature se montrait en eux dans toute sa pureté et sa dignité, et n'était point encore souillée par la vanité, par le luxe, et par la sotte ambition. Un homme n'était honoré sur la terre qu'à cause de sa force ou de sa vertu ; il n'était point riche par des charges ou des pensions, mais par son champ, par ses troupeaux, par ses enfants et ses serviteurs. (12)

The opposition between ancient simplicity and modern luxury is further politicized in Fénelon's *Télémaque*, where the ancient Mediterranean non-authoritarian monarchies and free-trading societies are favorably, if implicitly, contrasted to modern absolutism and mercantilism.

What often remains implicit in Fénelon is expressed unequivocally by Anne Dacier in the later quarrel.¹³ At times, admittedly, she does little more than echo the language of La Bruyère or Fénelon. Here, for example, is her response to the shock that the Moderns express at Homeric poverty and rusticity:

But, they say, who can bear to read that these princes prepare their own food, [...] that they labor with their hands, and that in his own dwelling Achilles performs the most servile duties? Such were the customs of those ancient heroic times, those happy times when people knew neither luxury nor soft refinements.

Mais, dit-on, qui peut souffrir que des princes préparent eux-mêmes leurs repas, [...] qu'ils travaillent eux-mêmes et qu'Achille fasse chez lui les fonctions les plus serviles? Telles étaient les mœurs de ces temps

héroïques, de ces heureux temps où l'on ne connaissait ni le luxe ni la mollesse. (*L'Iliade* xxvi)

As Dacier compares Homer's world to the current one, though, she goes one step further, painting a harshly critical picture of the luxury and etiquette of the contemporary court. While the previous apologies that we have seen simply affirm that modern palaces and etiquette have nothing to do with their ancient equivalents—that, as Longepierre argued, they are so different in their historic situation as to be incomparable—Dacier in contrast raises the stakes by drawing the parallel to the advantage of antiquity:

I like to see the heroes of Homer do what the patriarchs did, who were greater than kings and heroes; [...] No one ever saw Achilles or Agamemnon, for example, surrounded by officers, valets, gentlemen-in-waiting, or guards.

J'aime à voir les héros d'Homère faire ce que faisaient les patriarches, plus grands que les rois et que les héros; [...] on ne voit autour d'Achille, d'Agamemnon, etc., ni estafiers, ni valets de chambre, ni gentilhommes, ni gardes. (*L'Iliade* xxvii)

After amalgamating, in their mutual austerity, Homeric heroes and ancient patriarchs, Dacier takes aim at the very ceremonial usages most closely associated with Versailles, and with the subordinate personnel employed to theatrically reinforce the court's rigid hierarchy. The machinery of the court system is targeted. In reply to the Moderns' derision of the crudeness of Homeric court life and the poverty of ancient palaces, Dacier once again strikes directly at her own century and its ostentation:

I must be vulgar myself, because I admit that it is the refinement of my own century that makes me find even more beautiful the depiction of the times and manners rendered by Homer.

Il faut que je sois bien grossière, car j'avoue que c'est la délicatesse de notre siècle qui me fait trouver plus agréable cette peinture des temps et des mœurs qu'Homère décrit. (*Des causes* 143)

Dacier develops her boldest—and politically most electrifying—contrast between ancient and modern worlds when she appropriates to her own ends that favorite device of the Moderns in the quarrel: the parallel between the age of Louis XIV and that of the most celebrated Roman emperor, Augustus. However, Dacier perverts the parallel by comparing the

modern age not to Augustus's reign but to that of the most vicious emperor, Nero himself:

In the end, I am sure that if a talented man undertook a comparison of different ages, as Plutarch did in his *Parallel Lives* [...], one would find between those ancient times and our own the same difference as that between the statue of Alexander by Lysippus and that same statue after Nero had it gilded; this gilding had to be stripped off, because it corrupted its beauty. [...] The gilding that corrupts our own century, and which would have to be stripped off to give it back its beauty and strength, is luxury and soft refinements.

Enfin je suis persuadée que si un habile homme entreprenait de faire la comparaison des temps, comme Plutarque a fait celle des hommes illustres, [...] on trouverait entre ces temps-là [d'Homère] et le nôtre la même différence qui se trouva entre la statue d'airain, que Lysippe avait fait d'Alexandre, et cette même statue après que Néron l'eut fait dorer; il fallut lui ôter cette dorure, parce qu'elle avait corrompu toute sa beauté. [...] La dorure qui gâte notre siècle, et qu'il faudrait ôter pour lui redonner sa beauté et sa force, c'est le luxe et la mollesse. (*L'Iliade* xxvii–xxviii)

In crafting such a subversive parody of panegyric parallels between modern France and ancient Rome, Dacier clearly implicates Louis XIV, or at least his gilded Versailles. But if it were simply a literal matter of decorative dazzle and architectural flashiness, the parallel would be less explosive. Instead, Dacier's figurative opposition between gaudy pomp and true strength recalls the contemporaneous political critique formulated by opponents, such as Saint-Simon, of Versailles's "gilded cage" and the regime's abrogation of aristocratic privileges and rights. Jean Boivin's references, not without a certain admiration, to the "complete freedom" of speech practiced by Homer's heroes, and to the general "liberté publique des assemblées" in Greek antiquity, offer another interesting forerunner (*Apologie* 183–84). Can we therefore describe Ancient apologists like Dacier and Boivin as "liberal reactionaries," idolizing the solid ancient liberties of the nobility lost to the tinsel charm of modern monarchy?¹⁴ In certain respects, their expressions of austere, pseudorepublican (or aristocratic) values firmly place them among the forerunners to Montesquieu's anti-imperial *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* (1734). They likewise help pave the path for Voltaire, for whom (in his general distaste for modern fatuity) the simplicity of Homeric heroes only casts a more glaring light on one of his favorite targets: the contemporary courtiers of "Versailles and Saint-James," castigated,

in terms identical to Dacier's, for "the vain pomp, softness, and idleness in which those of the upper rank are raised" ("la vaine pompe, la mollesse et l'oisiveté dans lesquelles les personnes de haut rang sont nourries").¹⁵

Unlike these later thinkers, however, neither Boivin nor Dacier offers a sustained analysis or critique of contemporary power arrangements. Their admiration for Agamemnon dressing himself and for Achilles cooking his own meals is ultimately less a political statement than an aesthetic preference. It is the effect of an emotional attachment that arises from a powerful reading experience. Thus, rather than wade into political speculations, both Boivin and Dacier quickly return, after these brief if biting commentaries, to the matters of poetic genius that interest them. Nevertheless, in hinting at the political implications of primitive self-reliance, they tread an ancient path, stretching back to Tacitus and his own forerunners, and clear it anew for Enlightenment critics of absolutism.



"I like to see the heroes of Homer do what the patriarchs did, who were greater than kings and heroes." In these lines, as I have noted, Dacier links the moral austerity of preclassical antiquity to the values and beliefs of the Hebraic prophets. This fusing of pagan and sacred history is an extremely controversial position—and one that is often avoided, if not outright dismissed, by her own Ancient party allies. It does, however, serve to expose some of the troubling complexities of the Ancients' response to the third scandal of antiquity, that of paganism.

Dacier's position is simple: there should be nothing shocking about pagan antiquity because it is largely consonant with Judaic antiquity, and thus with the historic foundations of contemporary Christianity. Homer's world, Dacier asserts, is different from the modern world only to the degree to which moderns have deviated from their own privileged origins and fallen from previous divine grace:

In a word, the times that Homer portrays are the same in which God deigned to speak with men. Who would dare say that our ostentation, our luxury, and our pomp are as estimable as this noble simplicity, which was honored by such glorious intercourse?

En un mot, les temps qu'Homère peint sont les mêmes que ceux où Dieu daignait converser avec les hommes. Quelqu'un oserait-il dire que notre faste, notre luxe et notre pompe valent cette noble simplicité qui a été honorée d'un si glorieux commerce? (*L'Iliade*, xxvii)

Dacier's defense of paganism extends to every detail of the moral conduct of the Olympian deities. She insists that even the most apparently hot-headed and mischievous pagan gods are in reality paragons of the "noble simplicity" that characterized the time of the prophets, and for which she has already lauded Homer's heroes. I return to a passage quoted above, whose fuller theological context can now be appreciated:

I love to see Juno adorn herself without all our cosmetic aids, without a hairdresser, without ladies in waiting. These goddesses, though they dress themselves and adorn themselves without help, are no less pleasing or less dignified. It is the same for heroes as it is for gods, and no one ever saw Achilles or Agamemnon, for example, surrounded by officers, valets, gentlemen-in-waiting, or guards.

J'aime à voir Junon s'ajuster elle-même, sans cet attirail de toilette, sans coiffeuse, sans dame d'autour. Les déesses pour s'habiller et pour s'ajuster elles-mêmes n'en sont ni moins agréables ni moins respectables. Il en est des héros comme des dieux, on ne voit autour d'Achille, d'Agamemnon, ni estafiers, ni valets de chambre, ni gentilhommes, ni gardes. (*L'Iliade* xxvii)

In amalgamating Homeric epics and the Bible, Dacier not only effaces some of the radical alterity of the pagan world (though she celebrates that alterity elsewhere); furthermore, she confers on pagan works a semiauthoritative role as a pillar for current religious orthodoxy. And at certain moments she is willing to use the full force of that deeply conservative argument:

Homer often speaks of caldrons, pots, blood, fat, intestines, etc. One sees the princes themselves skin animals and roast them. Polite society today find this shocking; but we know that such acts are entirely in keeping with what is in Holy Scripture. Back in that time there was nothing more venerable and august than such things, and one cannot ridicule them today without impiety, because [...] the books of Homer are less full of these things than are the Holy Scriptures, which one would thereby also expose to the derision of freethinkers and atheists.

Homère parle souvent de chaudrons, de marmites, de sang, de graisse, d'intestins, etc. On y voit des princes dépouiller eux-mêmes les bêtes et les faire rôtir. Les gens du monde trouvent cela choquant; mais on fait voir que tout cela est entièrement conforme à ce que l'on voit dans l'Ecriture sainte; qu'il n'y avait alors rien de plus auguste ni de plus vénérable, et qu'on ne peut en faire des railleries sans impiété, puisque [...] les livres

d'Homère en sont encore moins remplis que les livres saints, qu'on expose par là aux railleries des libertins et des athées. (*L'Iliade* xxvi)

Once the *Iliad* and the Old Testament are conflated, what was once mere modern squeamishness becomes a kind of sacrilege: the “shock” felt by “polite society” at Homer’s world suddenly smells of heresy regarding Moses’s world. Be scandalized, Dacier suggests, at your own risk. The alarm of impiety is raised. But to little or no effect. Her rhetorical appeal here to the forces of religious repression is ultimately no more effective than, from the Modern camp, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin’s threatening cries against the alleged pagan-worship of his opponents in the Ancient camp. We have seen that religious authorities have no interest in actively policing the quarrel. Indeed, only a few years after Dacier wrote these lines, d’Aubignac’s thesis contesting Homer’s authorship of the *Iliad* was at last published—despite any fears of the potential parallel to Moses’s similarly contested authorship of the Pentateuch—with little controversy. No one enforced orthodoxy in matters of Greek poetics.

More importantly, the tide of intellectual history was running against Dacier. The Renaissance syncretic paradigms that sought common ground between pagan and Judeo-Christian beliefs had long been crumbling. It is true that certain defenders of antiquity still clung to the old humanist justifications for Greco-Roman mythology. The concept of a shared origin of pagan and monotheistic faiths, a *priscia theologica*, still had some credence. It was supported most vocally by Huet, and traces of its continuing influence can be occasionally found in Ancient party polemics.¹⁶ Thus Longepierre at the beginning of the quarrel cites Clement of Alexandria’s affirmation that “Plato is the Moses of the Greeks” (*Discours* 50). But this is a rearguard action that Longepierre quickly drops, and that, until Dacier, plays little role in the defense of Greek or Latin literature. Indeed, the Ancient party consistently veers, as we have seen, in the exact opposite direction: Greek antiquity is a world that is radically “remote.” Attempts to Christianize pagan literature would thus run counter to the entire project of exploiting the charm of foreignness that Longepierre wishes to cultivate. In short, the defenders of antiquity have more to gain in defamiliarizing than in familiarizing it. So it is that, despite briefly tipping his hat at the parallel of ancient Greek and Judeo-Christian traditions, Longepierre generally avoids entering into a defense of the theological or moral value of paganism—and even discounts such nonliterary concerns as irrelevant to the evaluation of ancient poetry.

Most Ancient apologists avoided, in particular, the longest established

tool for Christian defenses of the pagan: allegorical readings that sought monotheistic truths hidden inside polytheistic tales. This is not to say that the Ancient apologists discounted all allegorical interpretations of the classics, or, for that matter, that they dismissed its proper place in modern poetics. I will turn to the aesthetics of allegory, so essential to the quarrel, in the next section. In relation to the theological question at hand, however, it is essential to understand that allegory, as embraced by the Ancient party, does not serve primarily as an instrument of religious justification (though Dacier again proves here exceptional). The case of Boileau is crucial here. His 1674 *Art poétique* defends mythological characters in epic poetry precisely for their effectiveness as metaphorical agents. His pagan gods are certainly allegorized. But they are never Judeo-Christianized. He takes a firm stand on the matter, and vehemently denounces the common practice of mixing Christian and pagan subjects in modern epics. As already noted, Boileau is engaged in these years in a heated conflict with the leader of the nascent Modern movement, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin. In response to the latter's celebration of modern Christian epics, Boileau insists upon the clear and irreconcilable divorce between religion and literature, between theological truth and poetic invention. The two, in his mind, should never meet. Thus he attacks the hybrid monsters created by oxymoronic "mythological Christians" ("fabuleux Chrétiens") whose "reprehensible concoctions / give even to [Christian] truth the appearance of myth" ("le mélange coupable / même à ses vérités donne l'air de la fable"; *OC* 173–74). Such confusion of pagan and Judeo-Christian traditions threatens, according to Boileau, "to transform the true God into a fictional god" ("Du Dieu de vérité, faire un dieu de mensonges"; 174).

The "fictional" is indeed the heart of the matter here. What Boileau admires in narrative poetry is precisely its thrilling fictional action, not its abstract theological content: as a genre, epic "is sustained by mythological fable and lives by wondrous fiction" ("se soutient par la fable et vit de fiction"; 173). Allegory is essential to that purely literary mission. Through the use of emblematic pagan gods, poets can anthropomorphize and mobilize in epic action a wide range of vast natural forces or ethical abstractions: "everything takes a body, a soul, a spirit, a face" ("tout prend un corps, une âme, un esprit, un visage"; 173). Through what we might call the allegorical shortcut, the poet may narrate events with the required "verve and speed."¹⁷ Allegory is a poetical "ornament," yes, but, more importantly, a narratively enabling ornament that activates the inactive.¹⁸ As for the nature of the figurative ornaments involved, they must, according to Boileau, be simple and clear in their allegorical function, and far from theo-

logical in their signification. Here is the field of operation for allegory, as he strictly circumscribes it: “Minerva is prudence, Venus, beauty. / Rather than see vapors producing thunder, / It is instead Jupiter armed to frighten the world.” (“Minerve est la prudence, et Vénus la beauté. / Ce n’est plus la vapeur qui produit le tonnerre, / C’est Jupiter armé pour effrayer la terre”; 173). According to this schema, the ancient gods, when not representing simple physical (thunder, beauty) or psychological qualities, personify equally basic moral qualities, such as “prudence.” It is important to note that this single moral example cited by Boileau concerns what was known at the time precisely as a “pagan virtue,” one that needed no special divine revelation or grace in order to flourish. His allegorized paganism thus remains faithful to paganism.¹⁹ And it admits no incursions from Christian modernity. “The frightening mysteries of the Christian faith are not a proper subject for [the] enlivening ornaments” of allegory (“De la foi d’un chrétien les mystères terribles / D’ornements égayés ne sont point susceptibles”; 173).

Boileau’s path will be largely followed by the Ancient party in the coming decades. Despite the occasional attempts by an Anne Dacier to reconcile the Christian and the pagan, the religion of the ancients will be embraced precisely for its remoteness from modern theology. Indeed its distance from modern notions of truth makes it all the more poetically valuable. There is thus no need to explain away the scandal of its profound irrationality. Rather, irrationality is to be embraced—and its scandal, exploited. Boivin bests sums up the argument:

The pagan religion was a *purely poetic religion*. It was full of absurdities. *But it was from the depths of these absurdities that ancient poetry drew its greatest advantages.* And this should hardly be surprising, since most of our poets still go back to the myths and gods of antiquity in order to enliven their poems.

La religion des païens était une *religion purement poétique*. Elle était pleine d’absurdités. *Mais c’était du fond de ces absurdités mêmes que l’ancienne poésie tirait ses plus grands avantages.* Et il ne faut pas s’en étonner, puisque la plupart de nos poètes ont encore recours à la fable et aux dieux de l’Antiquité pour égayer leurs poèmes. (*Apologie* 34; italics mine)²⁰

In reply to those Moderns who insist that Homer should have known better than to indulge his audience in the vices of his gods, in reply to those who would have preferred the *Iliad* to be have been written by a philosopher like Socrates or Plato, and not a blind poet seeking applause, Boivin offers this simple distinction:

The most enlightened of the pagans well understood the extravagance of this theology [...]. But these pagans were orators, were philosophers, were legislators. Homer was a poet.

Les plus éclairés d'entre les païens ont bien senti l'extravagance de cette théologie [...]. Mais ces païens étaient des orateurs, des philosophes, des législateurs. Homère était poète. (33–34).

Homer was a poet, and the business of poetry is not that of theology, despite the claims of La Motte, who, as Boivin sarcastically phrases it, “has undertaken to reform all the abuses of paganism” (“ait entrepris de réformer tous les abus du paganisme”; 61).²¹ For Terrasson, we have seen, Homer was worse than his more enlightened peers. For Boivin, worse is better: a superior philosophy might have dimmed the poet’s sublime flame. Thus, far from wishing “to reform the abuses of paganism,” Boivin insists that they are of unparalleled value—at least for good fiction.

The theology of Homer is nothing other than the pagan religion of the time of Homer, who was a poet, and for whom, speaking on human terms, it would not be fitting to assume the role of the reformer of a religion in which he had the misfortune of being born and raised.

La théologie d’Homère n’était autre chose que la religion païenne du siècle d’Homère, qui était poète, et auquel humainement parlant, il ne convenait pas de s’ériger en réformateur d’une religion, dans laquelle il avait eu le malheur d’être né, et d’avoir été élevé. (192)

In one sentence, Boivin surveys the most effective Ancient arguments. He again stresses the radical differences separating the “time of Homer” from the modern day. He pleads for a sophisticated tolerance for those shocking differences, and refuses to condemn the poet for simply following the beliefs of his age (that kind of natural conformity, he suggests, characterizes modern life too). And he makes a crucial distinction between a “poet” like Homer and a philosopher or theologian, between a creator of fiction and a discoverer of truths. The very errors and “absurdities” that make for the “misfortune” of philosophy paradoxically reward literature. The counter-cultural appeal of antiquity is, in the final analysis, an essentially poetic one. It now remains to be seen just how literature finds its modern fortune in ancient misfortune.

PART III * Aesthetics

The Geometric & the Sublime

10 * Philosophy's Turn

To Cut Poetry's Throat

In his 1687 reply to Perrault's Modern manifesto, Longepierre makes many concessions. Indeed, he concedes the advantage to modernity in all domains except one: the arts of language. And even here he hedges. When the *Discours* turns to the delicate subject of the current king's standing in comparison to the great ages of antiquity, Longepierre prudently avoids belittling as inferior the modern writers whom Louis XIV himself has patronized, and who represent his personal stake in history's ongoing contest for cultural supremacy. Instead, genuflecting before royal glory, Longepierre encourages the monarch to demonstrate once again his famed magnanimity by granting the prize, in this lone domain, to the humbled past. After all, Louis possesses a surfeit of superiority; if anything, he suffers from an embarrassment of prizes and palms. Contemporary poetry may equal or surpass Homer or Virgil, but why begrudge antiquity its sole consolation? So Longepierre, celebrating the king's kind condescension, asserts that the monarch "does not wish to start cruelly stripping antiquity of the only glory that is now left to it, that of using words well" ("ne voudra point commencer par ravir avec violence à l'Antiquité la seule gloire du bien dire qui lui est demeurée"; 201). The king's unparalleled accomplishments in the things that really count, such as military glory and wise statecraft, surely shield him from the pangs of petty jealousy when eyeing another age's merely literary achievements. Louis can "be confident, as long as great actions rise above words, of thereby rising above all the ages of the past" ("s'assurer de s'élever par là au-dessus de tous les siècles, autant que les grandes actions sont au-dessus des paroles"; 211).

Yet whatever rightful satisfaction Louis may take in the superiority of

his deeds, they are ultimately irrelevant to the question at hand. It is, after all, the art of “words,” and not the valiance of “actions,” that constitutes the central issue of the quarrel. It thus matters not whether Longepierre’s concessions here appear merely tactical (a sly appeal to the king’s self-fashioned generosity) or entirely sincere (a straightforward admission of modernity’s superiority in all areas but literature). The fact remains that, where it counts, the ancients win the day. Indeed, Longepierre’s concessions are in many ways not concessions at all, but rather the necessary consequence of his governing logic of history. For Longepierre, we have seen, the ancients’ victory in the arts paradoxically accords with their defeat elsewhere. Antiquity’s philosophical and political deficiencies nourish its aesthetic strengths; its primitive vices help sustain its creative virtues.

In his summary of the incipient quarrel, Longepierre divides these vices, which spur the debate, into two broad categories: antiquity’s general immorality and the puerile illogicality of its authors: “We have said that Homer could be reproached for two types of faults: the faults liable to his time, [...] and the faults liable to Homer himself, by which I mean certain negligent errors that come from human weakness, or which come from a lack of care” (“nous avons dit qu’on pouvait reprendre de deux sortes de fautes dans Homère; les fautes du siècle d’Homère, [...] et les fautes d’Homère, je veux parler de certaines petites négligences qui échappent à la faiblesse humaine, ou qui viennent d’un manque de soin”; 104). The first set of faults, those of Homer’s time, concern the brutal customs we have seen decried by the Moderns. The second set of faults, those of Homer himself, refers not to the content but to the form of the work of art. Here Longepierre targets the Moderns’ critique of the ancient epic’s profound incoherence and irregularity, imputed to the poet’s archaic artlessness.

Both critiques, moral and methodological, are subsumed at the time under the heading of “philosophical.” That term, we know, had recently assumed new potency in France under the influence of Cartesian rationalism. In many respects, though, Longepierre is describing just one more battle in a millennial struggle between philosophy and poetry, dating back at least to Plato and to what Curtius aptly termed the “rebellion of Logos against Myth—but also against poetry” (*European Literature* 204). By the second half of the seventeenth century that battle had reached a new phase. The rise of natural sciences, coupled with the promise of a fundamentally “reasonable” Christianity, seemed to guarantee once and for all the victory of philosophy over its age-old rival. Perrault can thus, as we have seen, express unshakable confidence regarding the hierarchy of disciplines: “it is up to the philosopher to lead the poet, not the poet to lead the philosopher” (*Parallèle* 3:276). The “philosopher,” however, had only now acquired, the

Moderns claimed, the strength to lead. Fontenelle expounded on this providential historical development, proclaiming that philosophy, after ages of frustration, must mercilessly exercise its rightful dominion, over literature as well as other areas:

There is no doubt that philosophy has now attained new degrees of perfection. It has thus shed a light that is not limited to the domain of philosophy alone, but that instead gains new territory every day, and ultimately spreads over the entire world of letters. Order, clarity, correctness, which were once qualities rare even among the best writers, are now much more common, even among the most mediocre. This change for the better up to a certain point can be perceived everywhere. Will poetry take pride in the glorious privilege of being exempt from this improvement? Ancient philosophers were more poets than philosophers. They reasoned very little, and they taught whatever they wanted with complete freedom. When modern poets prove to be more philosophers than poets, we can say that each side has its own turn.

Il n'est pas douteux que la philosophie n'ait acquis aujourd'hui quelques nouveaux degrés de perfection. De là se répand une lumière qui ne se renferme pas dans la région philosophique, mais qui gagne toujours comme de proche en proche, et s'étend enfin sur tout l'empire des lettres. L'ordre, la clarté, la justesse, qui n'étaient pas autrefois des qualités trop communes chez les meilleurs auteurs, le sont aujourd'hui beaucoup davantage, et même chez les médiocres. Le changement en bien jusqu'à un certain point est assez sensible partout. La poésie se piquera-t-elle du glorieux privilège d'en être exempte? Les philosophes anciens étaient plus poètes que philosophes; ils raisonnaient peu, et enseignaient avec une entière liberté tout ce qu'ils voulaient. Quand les poètes modernes seraient plus philosophes que poètes, on pourrait dire que chacun a son tour. (*Sur la poésie*, in *OC* 5:556–57)

Philosophy at long last has “its turn” to command. But poetry has no reason to rebel, for the new philosophy’s “empire,” Fontenelle assures us, is to the benefit of all. Indeed, poetry can now be released from its age-old bondage to the arbitrary whims of inspiration and talent. Under the sure-footed guidance of Cartesian rigor, even the most “mediocre” of modern writers can excel, indeed outstrip, the geniuses of a benighted past. Method trumps the Muses.

In the early eighteenth century, the Moderns fully embraced a favored name for their chosen method: “geometry.” By that time there was something a bit desperate in their clinging to a certain notion of Cartesian ra-

tionalism, which, under the imported influence of Locke and Newton, was increasingly menaced by a rising empiricism that carefully balanced the demands of abstract reason with observation and experimentation. These self-proclaimed “geometers” of literature, however, refused to subject their *a priori* principles to the test of sensorial experience or observed phenomena, including that of individual works of literature. Practice was not to interfere with theory. As La Motte phrased it in his *Réflexions sur la critique*, geometry “arranges everything under its order” (“range tout dans son ordre”; *TC* 345). The study of literature must therefore abandon its traditional approach of haphazard responses to particular works, and embrace a strictly Euclidean approach:

The geometric approach is certainly quite as valuable as that of literary commentary. [...] There is no topic or matter that should escape the most rigorous examination: the art of poetry has its own axioms, its own theorems, corollaries, and demonstrations; and though its forms and terms may appear in a different guise, it is always fundamentally the same steps of reasoning, the same method, however adorned they be, that result in true proofs.

L'esprit géométrique vaut bien l'esprit commentateur. [...] Il n'y a point de matière qui ne soit sujette à la plus exacte discussion: l'art poétique même a ses axiomes, ses théorèmes, ses corollaires, ses démonstrations, et quoique la forme et les noms en soient déguisés, c'est toujours au fond la même marche du raisonnement, c'est toujours de la même méthode, quoique ornée, que résultent les véritables preuves. (*Textes critiques* 344–45)

La Motte, poet that he was, could at times be conflicted about his own geometrical exigencies. His fascinating series of poems railing against all that is irrational in poetry—an admonishing ode to “Enthusiasm,” for example, in which the author mocks its “follies,” “errors,” and “ridiculous heights” (“ridicules hauteurs”), before abandoning its charms and happily embracing “la raison sévère”—reveal a creative artist frequently struggling with his own philosophical principles (*OC* 1:322–32).¹

Other Modern partisans suffered no qualms in declaring the absolute authority of geometry over poetry. Terrasson's 1715 *Dissertation critique sur l'Iliade* is surely the most imposing such manifesto. We have already seen his aim of “wrecking” Homer, much as Descartes had demolished Aristotle (*Dissertation* 1:xlix). Terrasson attempts to do so with what he describes as a series of geometric proofs. This of course caused great consternation among the defenders of Homer, not least of all Anne Dacier,

who could only throw her hands up and exclaim: “A geometer, I say, what a curse for poetry is a geometer!” (“Un géomètre, dis-je, quel fléau, pour la poésie, qu’un géomètre!”; *Des causes*, 613). Terrasson replies:

It is this spirit of geometry that Mme D[acier] would like to exclude from the examination of Homer, and not without reason. Geometry seems to have always brought misfortune to this poet, and the two most formidable censors that he had in antiquity, Pythagoras and Plato, were geometers. It is in this sense that one can indeed cry: “What a curse!” Not, however, “for poetry,” but instead “for Homer,” what a curse is a geometer!

C’est cet esprit [de géométrie] que Mme D. veut exclure de l’examen d’Homère, et ce n’est pas sans juste cause. La géométrie semble avoir porté malheur à ce poète de tout temps, et les deux plus redoutables censeurs qu’il ait eu dans l’Antiquité, savoir Pythagore et Platon, étaient géomètres. C’est en ce sens que l’on doit s’écrier : quel fléau, non pour la poésie, mais pour Homère qu’un géomètre. (*Dissertation* 1:lxv–vi)

For Terrasson it is only natural to mark an absolute distinction between Homer in particular and “poetry” in general. The two are indeed something of antonyms once you accept Terrasson’s definition of poetry as geometrized discourse. “Homeric poetry” here becomes an oxymoron. The Greek epic is in fact nothing but *prepoetic* babble, fundamentally opposed (reprising La Motte’s terms) to all of poetry’s governing “axioms” and “theorems.”

Anne Dacier’s dismay begins to suggest the outrage felt by some at this philosophical incursion into the realm of nonrational—indeed, they would argue, suprarational—poetic language. Boileau, according to his friend Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, had frequently echoed this sentiment of revolt against geometry’s increasing hegemony:

I have often heard M. Despréaux [Boileau] say that the philosophy of Descartes had cut poetry’s throat; and it is certain that what poetry has borrowed from mathematics has desiccated its spirit and accustomed it to a concrete or material precision that has nothing to do with what might be called the properly metaphysical precision of poets and orators. Geometry and poetry have their separate and distinct rules, and those who wish to judge Homer by Euclid are no less impertinent than those who wish to judge Euclid by Homer.

J’ai souvent ouï dire à M. Despréaux que la philosophie de Descartes avait coupé la gorge à la poésie, et il est certain que ce qu’elle emprunte des

mathématiques dessèche l'esprit et l'accoutume à une justesse matérielle qui n'a aucun rapport avec la justesse métaphysique, si cela se peut dire, des poètes et des orateurs. La géométrie et la poésie ont leurs règles à part et celui qui s'avise de juger Homère par Euclide n'est pas moins impertinent que celui qui voudrait juger Euclide par Homère. (J.-B. Rousseau, *Correspondance* 1:15)

Boileau's despair would be shared by many in the following century. The geometric method seemed indeed to have cut poetry's throat. Voltaire, though sometimes torn (as we will later see) between his Ancient and Modern tendencies, could not help but bemoan what he feared to be the near death of poetry in his time. Cartesian France was naturally the most devastated: "Of all the civilized nations, ours is the least *poetic*," he writes in his 1733 *Essai sur la poésie épique*. Why? To reprise a phrase later employed against Voltaire himself, *la faute est à Descartes*. Of course, classical rules and seventeenth-century poets may have first "accustomed French poetry to a much too uniform march," but worse was to come:

The geometric spirit, which has in our time taken over the realm of belles-lettres, has proved to be a new brake on poetry. [...] Method, in a word, is the dominant quality of our writers.

L'esprit géométrique, qui de nos jours s'est emparé des belles-lettres, a encore été un nouveau frein pour la poésie. [...] La méthode est la qualité dominante de nos écrivains. (*English Essays* 495)

Voltaire's complaint, among many others, has nourished a commonplace of literary history according to which, to cite Paul Hazard's memorable phrase, the Enlightenment was "an age without poetry." "Poetry died; or at least it seemed to die. Completely imbued with mechanical and dry intelligence, it lost its *raison d'être*."² The Moderns, Hazard suggests, had won the battle over poetry; but they destroyed, so to speak, the village in order to save it.

According to this vision of a looming Enlightenment death of poetry, the attempts by Boileau and Dacier to "exempt" poetry from philosophy's control are nothing but a rearguard action against the implacable tide of history. They cling to worn neo-Platonic notions, to the dwindling remains of the Renaissance past and its mystifications of art and divine poetic fury. A more recent and perhaps more potent forerunner, however, is to be found in Blaise Pascal. Ancient partisans do seem to follow the path cleared decades earlier by the Jansenist philosopher in his efforts to circumscribe the proper domain of rationalism. His reflections on the counter-

balancing faculty to the *esprit de géométrie*, the mysterious *esprit de finesse* whose subtle maneuvers defy method, help build the psychological and epistemological foundations for conceptualizing the impenetrable operations of beauty and grace. In terms of their creation, these charms resist all rationally derived rules, for they depend on the apparently arbitrary sensuality of signs, whether material or linguistic, rather than on their denotative transparency. Eloquence and poetic language are thus fundamentally opposed to the fixity and clarity of the mathematical sign.³ And, just as in their genesis, the effects produced by beauty and its pleasures cannot be systematized or diagrammed. For Pascal they depend on a thousand fleeting circumstances, the moment in time and the place beheld, the perspective and the mood of the beholder.⁴ Aesthetic appreciation is thus subject to the vagaries of experience.

Such are the subterranean “secrets” of art embraced by many of the leading poets and playwrights of the day, who found common ground here with Ancient partisans. Whether for a Racine or a Molière, the principal “rule” of art—to please—resists all reasoned rules.⁵ For the Moderns, on the other hand, such declarations concerning the instinctual and the ineffable were nothing but obfuscation. They were also terribly *dépassé*. Pascal’s fideistic suspicion of reason’s empire, although perhaps odd in an age of supposedly enlightened and rational Christianity, might still be excusable in the realm of religion; but it was certainly, the Moderns would argue, not admissible in the secular realm of polite culture and civilized arts. And the metaphysical nonsense of neo-Platonic inspiration, poetic fury, and revelatory beauty was simply to be consigned to the dustbin of Renaissance history. What the Moderns underestimate here, however, is the innovative path by which the defenders of poetry’s power were rethinking this heritage, and thus constructing a bridge between traditional concepts of the nonrational and the soon nascent philosophy of aesthetics. But Ancient partisans did so only by shrewdly replying to the Moderns’ own aesthetic principles of rational design and enlightened didacticism, to which we must now turn.

Poetic Economy

Despite his digressive conversational style, it is possible to chart a quite simple course through the first three volumes of Perrault’s *Parallèle* and his intermittent efforts to elucidate a modern rationalist aesthetics. In the first volume he lays out a tripartite hierarchy of the faculties deployed in the arts, ascending from the bodily senses to the emotions of the heart and, finally, to the crowning human gift of reason. In the second volume,

he explicates the utility of the highest faculty, reason—and of its most advanced operation, the geometrical method—to the creation of literary works. And in the third, he draws from this framework a poetics whose governing principle is a strict economy of design that can only be guaranteed by an enlightened and consciously systematic author. It is this poetic ideal that Perrault employs to drive the final nail in the coffin of Homer and ancient poetry.

In the second dialogue of the first volume, Perrault turns from the literary to the plastic arts. When examining the art of painting, his spokesperson, the Abbé, distinguishes among the three principal elements of a canvas. First is the use of colors, which gives immediate pleasure to the visual *senses*. Second is the depiction of various emotions in the subjects' expressions and gestures, which gratifyingly touches the viewer's *heart*. And finally there is the carefully meditated arrangement of all the parts of the composition, whose deliberate design is appreciated by the *intellect* alone (2:213). There is no doubt that for Perrault this last element represents the highest aspect of art, that which makes it worthy to be called a liberal, rather than mechanical, art. The "overall plan and [...] the attractive order of a composition that is judiciously organized" constitute the only aspect of painting that "pleases our reason, and makes us feel a joy that is admittedly less intense, but more intellectual and spiritual, and thus more worthy of a man."⁶

Perrault proceeds to apply this same tripartite hierarchy to the other arts. In music, the tone of a beautiful voice delights the aural senses; the expression of "gay or languishing movements" touches the heart; and, most importantly, the "admirable economy" ("économie admirable") of a complex musical arrangement pleases the intellect (1:214). Likewise, in the arts of language, the sound of words and the gestures of the speaker gratify the audience's eyes and ears; the swelling figures of rhetoric stir the passions; while finally, and much more edifyingly, the "beautiful economy of a discourse's design rises to the highest part of the soul and gives it a completely intellectual and spiritual joy, which it alone may feel" ("la belle économie du discours s'élève jusqu'à la partie supérieure de l'âme pour lui donner une certaine joie toute spirituelle, qu'elle seule est capable de ressentir"; 1:214).

It is only in modern times, of course, that artists have attained the judicious intelligence necessary to lift the mind by such an "economy" of forms. Nevertheless, Perrault must admit that, despite all the advances of the new age, the cruder pleasures of the senses and passions, which were the only ones available to antiquity, are still today the most commonly appreciated. As we have seen, the enlightened moderns are always but a happy few among the ever-primitive *peuple*:

I would thus say that in order to be admired by the whole earth, it sufficed for Apelles and Zeuxis to have charmed the eyes and touched the heart, without its being necessary for them to possess this third part of the art of painting, which aims only to please our reason; this is because the third part, far from charming the great majority of common people, often impedes it from doing so, and only ends up displeasing them.

Je dis donc qu'il a suffi aux Apelle et aux Zeuxis pour se faire admirer de toute la terre d'avoir charmé les yeux et touché le cœur, sans qu'il leur ait été nécessaire de posséder cette troisième partie de la peinture, qui ne va qu'à satisfaire la raison; car bien loin que cette partie serve à charmer le commun du monde, elle y nuit fort souvent, et n'aboutit qu'à lui déplaire (1:214–15).

Or, as he later phrases it, “generally speaking, what is most refined and most intellectual and spiritual in each art has the gift of displeasing the common people” (“Généralement ce qui est de plus fin et de plus spirituel dans tous les arts a le don de déplaire au commun du monde”; 1:217–18). The ancients are again likened to the ignorant and uneducated masses of modern times. If an atavistic admiration for ancient artworks therefore still survives, we should not be surprised, since the base senses and passions we share with the “common people” will always take delight in superficial charms.

But to return to the enlightened elite, what precisely has allowed the modern arts to so happily elevate themselves to the plane of the intellect? It is, once again, nothing but the new “method” perfected in Perrault’s century and rapidly applied to every form of artful language, to all the branches of “eloquence.” Perrault explicates at length in the second volume:

In order to show that the ancients were inferior to the moderns in all the areas of eloquence, and particularly in that which concerns the *essential beauties* of which I spoke, it will fully suffice to prove that *method*—which is an *indispensable requirement for producing these beauties*, and which with the passing of time has become a common and ordinary practice—*was a thing completely unknown to them*.

Il me suffira pour faire voir que les anciens ont été inférieurs aux modernes dans toutes les parties de l'éloquence, mais particulièrement dans ce qui regarde *les beautés essentielles* que j'ai touchées, de prouver que *la méthode* qui est d'une *nécessité indispensable pour les bien mettre en œuvre*, et qui avec le temps est devenue commune et ordinaire, *leur était une chose presque inconnue*. (2:52; italics mine)

The “essential beauties” to which Perrault refers are—in total opposition to the allegedly sublime figures arising from ancient inspiration—nothing but the “clear, precise [*nette*], and methodical” use of language brought to perfection by Descartes and his geometrical approach (2:58). So profound is the progress realized by this method that almost any contemporary writer can achieve a perfect “order” and aesthetic economy simply by following it, and thus assure his or her superiority over the ancients (2:60). Since every period in history benefits from more or less the same amount of instinctual talent, which is a raw matter produced by unchanging “nature,” it naturally follows that the modern supplement of method guarantees the triumph of the contemporary author. Once again for the Moderns, the passing of time adds; it never subtracts.

More importantly, method is of a categorically higher order than talent or inspiration. These latter gifts of nature, which were all the ancients possessed, can only produce the meaner beauties of the first two orders, those that appeal to the bodily senses (fine-sounding language) and the passions of the heart (lofty rhetoric). But the “essential beauties” of deliberate design are produced exclusively by acquired method. So Perrault anticipates Fontenelle by arguing that a modern methodical writer, even of limited natural gifts, can surpass the most inspired geniuses of the past, who relied on nothing but instinct: “quite a few works of the moderns, even though their authors are of mediocre talent, are worth more than works of the greatest men of antiquity” (“plusieurs ouvrages des modernes, quoique leurs auteurs soient d’un génie médiocre, valent mieux que plusieurs ouvrages des plus grands hommes de l’Antiquité”; 2:65). Nothing better proves modern superiority than the triumph of methodical mediocrity.

But what of the old argument that the ancients “adroitly hide” their secret order, that they were in fact capable of methodic economy, but wished to avoid a lifeless and mechanical structure (2:68)? This recourse to *ars celera artem* is for Perrault merely more of the obfuscating nonsense that he generally imputes to the infatuated commentators of ancient texts. For Perrault, good literature needs no explicating or annotating. Like geometry, it is transparent. In modern works, “everything is so well planned and thoroughly thought out that you need only read them to understand them” (“tout est si bien rangé et si bien digéré qu’il n’y a qu’à les lire pour les entendre”; 2:68). Ancient works, on the other hand, inevitably suffer from a “lack of order”—indeed, an “impenetrable obscurity” and “confusion”—for this simple reason: their writers, depending entirely on the whims of inspiration, “paid so little attention to separating and clearly delineating things, [...] writing in an uninterrupted flow whatever came into their minds” (“avaient si peu d’attention à séparer et à démêler net-

tement les choses [...], écrivant tout d'une suite ce qui leur venait dans l'esprit"; 2:66–68). Such, Perrault laments, is the source of the mysteries that fed the ingenious commentaries of countless centuries of scholars.

What of the ancient poet richest in such obscurity, and thus most tantalizing to commentators? In the third volume Perrault turns to Homer, and to the crucial battleground in the debate over poetics. We know that Homer, being the first poet of the primitive "enfance du monde," was to the Moderns' mind naturally the most imperfect (3:32). And chief among Homer's faults was the sorry lack of methodical order in his epic. Perrault's judgment of the *Iliad* is merciless: the story as a whole simply has no "structure and economy."⁷ To explain the depth of this aesthetic disorder, Perrault takes an audacious step. He considers the possibility that the *Iliad* was not in fact conceived in its entirety by a single poet named Homer. Rather, the poet randomly composed a series of separate songs, of which later Greek compilers "joined together the best" (3:34). This would certainly help explain the supposed incoherence of the work as a whole. His Abbé cites "ancients critics" to support the claim that

Homer had never composed the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* other than in separate bits, without any unity of design, and had given no other names to each of these separate parts, which he had composed without order and without any arrangement in the heat of his imagination, except for the names of the subject matters they portrayed.

Homère n'avait jamais composé l'*Iliade* et l'*Odyssee* que par morceaux, sans unité de dessein, et [il] n'avait point donné d'autres noms à ces diverses parties qu'il avait composées sans ordre et sans arrangement dans la chaleur de son imagination, que les noms des matières dont il traitait. (3:36–37)

Perrault is entirely indebted here to the d'Aubignac's above-mentioned treatise, written a good decade and half earlier and circulated in manuscript form under the title *Conjectures académiques, ou Dissertation sur l'Iliade*.⁸ D'Aubignac, a crucial herald of the methodical aesthetics embraced by the Moderns, judges any work of literature by its structural economy. By this measure the *Iliad* is a complete disaster: "I have meditated often, and at length, on how to comprehend the overall design of the poem called the *Iliad* [...] and I frankly admit that I cannot find any such thing" ("J'ai médité souvent, et à loisir, pour comprendre quel est le dessein de ce poème qu'on nomme l'*Iliade* [...] et j'avoue franchement que je ne l'ai pu trouver"; 120). Now, if the creation of an ordered composition is, as d'Aubignac and the Moderns claim, to be solely attributed to the judicious design of a

methodical author, we might assume by analogy that a disordered composition is necessarily to be attributed to an unmethodical or injudicious one. Sloppy poem, sloppy poet. For a rigorous classicist such as d'Aubignac (or Perrault), that formula holds true for most works of ancient genius, inspired but woefully incoherent. For d'Aubignac, however, the *Iliad*—unlike later, somewhat more polished works of classical antiquity—is simply *too* incoherent and disordered to be the work of any writer with intelligence enough to, well, write. No one is, or could ever be, *that* sloppy—at least no one attempting to write an epic poem. D'Aubignac can only conclude that the epic is the work of a heterogeneous group of rhapsodes (82–83).⁹ Any other solution simply defies the laws of human nature:

[It would be] ridiculous to imagine that a man would decide to form an immense design, and then to compose all the parts in single detached pieces in order to later stitch them together, and link them together only by what haphazard chance and the momentary disposition of his mind should allow. [...] I do not think that anybody ever decided to proceed in this fashion for the creation of a large work, but rather that [the *Iliad*'s songs] are poems written by different people.

[Il serait] ridicule de s'imaginer qu'un homme s'avise de former un grand dessein, et d'en former toutes les parties par pièces détachées pour les coudre ensemble, et leur donner telle liaison que le hasard et la disposition de son esprit leur pourraient permettre. [...] Je crois que personne ne s'est jamais avisé d'en user de la sorte dans la fabrique d'un grand œuvre, mais plutôt que ce sont des poésies de différentes mains. (*Conjectures* 35)

Both d'Aubignac and Perrault adhere to the same general paradigm. Poetic works are judged by their exact economy of design. This economy can only be produced by a single and consciously methodical author. Holding to these same principles, the two thinkers then somewhat diverge in their application to the Homeric epic. D'Aubignac explains the disorder of the *Iliad* by its multiple authors, while Perrault, after flirting with this theory, retreats and explains it by the appallingly chaotic creative process of a single, though slapdash, author. In both cases, however, it is the absence of a clearly defined and unified authorial *intention* that creates disorder. No design by the creator, no design in the creation. There is no room here for the hidden, unconscious order that might spring from the wonders of chance or the fires of inspiration.

Nothing is surprising about this penchant, already witnessed, for such unitarian systems, whether they be political, religious, epistemological, or

aesthetic. The Moderns reveal themselves here once again to be heirs to Descartes and his monocentrism:

There is not so much perfection in those works composed of various pieces and made by diverse hands, as in those on which a single person has worked. So one finds that buildings that a single architect has undertaken and completed are usually more beautiful and better ordered than those that several have attempted to put together.

il n'y a pas tant de perfection dans les ouvrages composés de plusieurs pièces, et faits de la main de divers maîtres, qu'en ceux auxquels un seul a travaillé. Ainsi voit-on que les bâtiments qu'un seul architecte a entrepris et achevés ont coutume d'être plus beaux et mieux ordonnés que ceux que plusieurs ont tâché de raccommoder. (*Discours*, part 2, p. 13)

The poet as Cartesian architect is firmly adopted by d'Aubignac, for whom the only author who merits the name is one

who ha[s] conceived of a subject in order to treat it, and who makes this conception the pivot of all the lines that he draws from it, that is to say, the end goal of all the matters that he wants to treat.

qui avait envisagé un sujet pour le traiter, et qu'il en fait comme le centre de toutes les lignes qu'il tirait, c'est-à-dire, comme le but de tout ce qu'il voulait traiter. (*Conjectures* 124)

La Motte later summarizes the monomania of methodical intention in these uncompromising terms:

The art of the author is to eliminate anything that can render his design equivocal; otherwise he will not be able to create this pleasure in unity that comes from the reader's naturally relating all the parts to a whole, from his approving of the proportions, and from his admiring the intelligence of the creator, who has done nothing by chance, and who seems to have conceived of his whole work in one single stroke. It is thus necessary that the design be strikingly clear, so that even a mediocre mind cannot mistake it, and that all readers are in perfect accord in finding in the work the very same thing.

L'art de l'auteur est d'écarter tout ce qui peut rendre son dessein équivoque; autrement il ne saurait faire ce plaisir d'unité, qui vient de ce qu'on rapporte naturellement toutes les parties à un tout, qu'on en approuve les

proportions, et qu'on admire l'intelligence de l'ouvrier, qui n'a rien fait au hasard, et qui semble avoir conçu son ouvrage tout à la fois. Il faut donc que le dessein soit frappant, qu'un esprit même médiocre ne puisse s'y méprendre, et que tout le monde s'accorde à sentir là-dessus la même chose. (*Textes critiques* 305)

Without a properly conceived aesthetic economy, we are left with a work of dangerous ambiguity that will produce an unruly jungle of literary impressions. By what “axioms” or “theorems” could such a work be properly judged? Where the admirers of ancient poetry see an unquantifiable abundance of indefinable poetic effects, La Motte can see only troubling confusion. Universal consistency and conformity in the reading experience—shared by every reader, no matter how “mediocre” or brilliant—is the hallmark of poetic order. That order claims objectivity. Individual variation in the reading experience—splintered by countless diverging reactions and emotions—is the hallmark of poetic disorder. That disorder seduces subjectivity.

Disenchanting Antiquity

Faced with works of no solid philosophical structure, the admirers of antiquity are, according to this vision, simply enthralled by the enchanting, but ultimately superficial, materiality and emotivity of the poetic remains of the past. To return to Perrault's tripartite hierarchy, they are lured away from their reason by the seductions of the senses and the heart. They are sometimes awed by the illusory richness of a language now dead and associated with faraway and sunny lands. At other times they are seduced by the babble of an early civilization uttering its first, untamed poetic expressions. In both cases, Perrault undertakes something of a psychoanalysis of the Ancient party, diagnosing the pathology that leads its adherents to turn away from the salubrious light shed by the artwork's logical design and perversely to look toward the mystifications of its purely accessory charms.

Let me first turn to Perrault's critique of the attractions of times past. He takes aim here at what we have earlier seen to be the very real seduction of remoteness. Recall Perrault's phrase for those who, confronted with the loss of solid knowledge concerning antiquity and its dead languages, find this same antiquity “even all the more admirable in that one does not understand it” (*Parallèle* 1:13). Of course, Ancient apologists repeatedly claim to understand antiquity much better than their Modern opponents, whose ignorance in matters of philology they ridicule. But Perrault has

perhaps better understood his opponents than they have themselves. He has isolated a certain aesthetic quality that Ancient apologists could not yet fully embrace but certainly felt and, at times, cautiously cultivated.

At the close of the seventeenth century, however, the time is not quite ripe to unreservedly acknowledge the obscurity of the ancient past as one of its chief beauties. That is left to later ages. It is a charm perhaps most famously evoked in Virginia Woolf's aptly entitled essay "On Not Knowing Greek." An anachronistic detour through this essay can lead us to a better understanding of Perrault's position. Woolf of course "knew" Greek, as, she assumed (given the essay's repeated citations in Attic Greek), did many of her readers. The "not knowing" of the title refers not to this basic linguistic competence, but to the impossibility of grasping ancient poetry's original sonority and long lost connotations—a grasp unattainable, she claims, for those living two thousand years and more after its composition. And it is that "not knowing" that proves, paradoxically enough, to be the Greeks' great allure:

But again (the question comes back and back), Are we reading Greek as it was written [...] are we not reading wrongly? *losing our sharp sight in the haze of associations? reading into Greek poetry not what they have but what we lack?* [...] Chief among these sources of *glamour* and perhaps of *misunderstanding* is the language. We can never hope to get the whole fling of a sentence in Greek as we do in English. [...] We cannot pick up infallibly one by one all those minute signals by which a phrase is made to hint, to turn, to live. Nevertheless, it is the *language that has us most in bondage; the desire for that which perpetually lures us back.* (*Common Reader* 35; italics mine)

Woolf's appreciative analysis of the aura of antiquity recalls the occult qualities that Perrault disdained and derided two centuries earlier. Indeed, the *Parallèle* might rightly be renamed, with an intention quite contrary to Woolf's essay, "On Not Knowing Greek (and Latin)." Perrault is, as we have earlier seen, adamant on the matter: "It is that neither you, nor I, nor any other man that exists understands perfectly these two languages" ("C'est que ni vous, ni moi, ni quelque autre homme que ce puisse être n'entend parfaitement ces deux langues"; *Parallèle* 2:18). Phonologically speaking, "we are deprived of the grace and natural pronunciation" of ancient languages; lexically speaking, the "obscurity" of Greek words leaves them dangling between "several meanings." Perrault naturally draws radically different conclusions than does Woolf from this *unknowability*. For Perrault, it simply means that we must resist all considerations, and all evaluations, based on the fundamentally inaccessible linguistic and poetic

form of Greek works, and seek instead an understanding of their *content* alone—that is, of the supposedly translinguistic structural design that appeals to the reason, and not of the pleasing sounds and rhetorical figures that touch the senses or the heart.¹⁰ These latter charms naturally constitute for Perrault nothing but a specious “glamour” resulting from our “misunderstanding” of a dead language. While Woolf—with a tinge of aesthetic masochism, if not cultural necrophilia—tolerates an enticing “bondage” to a dead language, Perrault in contrast sees only a tyrannically “mad love” for linguistic corpses and their illusory phantoms. And while Woolf allows modern readers to intuitively infuse unknowable ancient texts with what “we lack” in the present day, while she (in her concluding lines) approvingly notes that “it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick of [...] our own age,” Perrault can only see an “overwhelming passion for all that is foreign and remote,” a passion that perversely commands “against all the evidence of one’s senses and reason” (1:7).

To better evaluate Perrault’s campaign against the sensorial mystique of ancient poetic and artistic forms, it would be useful to consider the added physicality it takes on in the second dialogue of the *Parallèle*. We return to the plastic arts. Perrault’s Abbé begins by repeating the standard Modern denunciation of the love for “things that a long passage of time has in a sense consecrated” (“les choses qu’une longue suite de temps a comme consacrées”; 1:183). He then expands on this love of the exotic, broaching the love of travel, not just to a faraway time, but also to a faraway place. At the time of the quarrel, the “modern” age in question was, for the French, essentially French (and for the English, somewhat English, though still frequently French).¹¹ Modernity was homegrown. Antiquity lay elsewhere. It was imported from the sunny South and the exotic East. Hence the “orientalism” of certain Ancient apologists, already witnessed in Dacier’s idealization of the indigenous lands of early civilization. Once we understand that antiquity was by definition *abroad*, it is clear why Perrault denounces his compatriots’ “scorn for their own country” and time, and mocks their love for the faraway.¹² In the case of sculpture, the land in question is Italy—where the original antiquities can be seen, not just their later plaster copies. And the voyage south, he warily remarks, infuses ancient art viewed during travel with rarified, but ultimately hollow, charms:

If the title of “ancient” is of great weight and merit for the work of a sculptor, then so also is the circumstance of being in a faraway country—one that it costs a voyage of three or four hundred leagues to see—which contributes no less to make it highly prized and of great reputation.

Si le titre d'ancien, est d'un grand poids et d'un grand mérite pour un ouvrage de sculpture, la circonstance d'être dans un pays éloigné, et qu'il en coûte pour le voir un voyage de trois ou quatre cents lieues, ne contribue pas moins à lui donner du prix et de la réputation. (1:185)

For Perrault the seductions of traveling south and east—seductions that will take such great hold in the next century's passion for the Grand Tour and for "dilettantism"—are simply distractions.¹³ With modern reproductive technologies bringing all art and knowledge right to the doorstep of the contemporary Frenchman, there is really no need to leave Paris at all (2:273). In Perrault's view, these reproductions effectively convey all that truly counts in an artwork, just as a printed text does in a poem: the underlying aesthetic intention, coherence, and order can be discerned in the copy as well as in the original. And given the Modern's preference for the transcendently structural above the concretely sensual, it is no surprise that Perrault boldly affirms that a good contemporary plaster cast displayed at Versailles "has the same beauty and the same grace as an original" found in Rome ("ait la même beauté et la même grâce que l'original"; 1:186).

Indeed, Perrault suggests that the replica is often not only as good as, but even *better* than the original. After all, an austere, colorless reproduction can serve as a salutary prophylactic against the sensorial charms of the original artwork. Sometimes those charms are enhanced by their exotic situation in a faraway locale. But sometimes they are simply enhanced by the passing of time's hand over the surface material, casting an attractive veil that clouds the beholder's critical vision. Perrault well understands that the haphazard marks of the aging process hold their own spurious attractions. Those who prefer originals to modern copies are thus enchanted not only by the lure of the voyage, but also by the traces of time found in the distorted tints and roughened textures of aging stone (1:184). To prove the fatuousness of the charms held by time's patina, Perrault has only to cite those lovers of Greco-Roman statues who have been fooled by fake antiquities, tricked by fresh-carved marble cunningly stained and "aged" by counterfeiters preying on their foolish preference for the ruined past.

Yet even Perrault must admit at times how enticing, even for the most dispassionate of rationalists, the allure of aging can be. He may resist the wear and tear of stone, but the softening hues of an old painting prove irresistible even to the leader of the Modern movement. It is not of course that he entirely abandons his Modern preferences here. Perrault, through the Abbé, asserts that painting has even more capacity to progress through time than sculpture, as it is an art whose techniques and principles are more com-

plex, thus more susceptible to refinement over the ages (1:199). However, he still must concede that the fresh paint of contemporary art, has, like newly picked fruit, “a certain rawness and sharpness, which time alone can cook and soften by tempering that which is too vivid, weakening that which is too strong, and blending together the extremities of the colors” (“une certaine crudité et une certaine âpreté, que le temps seul peut cuire et adoucir en amortissant ce qui est trop vif, en affaiblissant ce qui est trop fort, et en noyant les extrémités des couleurs les unes dans les autres”; 1:235). There is simply no way to deny the “real and effective beauty that this ancientness gives” to paintings (“la beauté réelle et effective que cette ancienneté leur donne”; 1:234). In the final analysis, though, this beauty is not inherent to the object itself but dependent on external circumstances. And these circumstances will come into play for modern art as well, for “the great canvases of Monsieur le Brun are being repainted and embellished each day” by “time” itself, which lends its softening hand to the painter’s original brush.¹⁴ The canvases and murals of Versailles will mellow soon enough. The charm of the old thus proves, if not illusory, merely circumstantial. It is a supplemental adornment that will inevitably be granted, in due time, to the moderns.

To return now to literary works, one might ask if the mellowing of time—the patina acquired by the aging of a dead language, the “cooking and softening” of sounds no longer spoken and words no longer clearly defined, the lacunae in worn and tattered manuscripts—might not also grant to Greek poetry the “real and effective beauty that ancientness gives.” But Perrault, of course, is not prepared for such a concession. Painting, in its redolent materiality, remains an exception in this regard. The beauty of literature is for Perrault to be judged above all by its transcendently abstract design. He thus refuses to mitigate his attack on the exoticism of dead languages. Indeed, just as he vaunts the superiority of modern plaster casts in comparison to their ancient originals, he also prefers modern translations to the Greek or Latin originals.¹⁵ For in the native language of the modern reader, the sense of words is transparent, the meaning is singular and precise. “Modern languages are more clear and less prone to foolish nonsense than ancient ones” (“Les langues modernes sont plus claires et moins sujettes aux galimatias que les anciennes”).¹⁶ This clarity is of course particularly striking in the modern French language, fixed and regulated by a cultivated elite and a credentialed Academy.¹⁷ Indeed, Perrault’s appreciation of the almost scientific precision of his mother tongue, and his distrust of the sensuous linguistic fog of other languages, extends beyond the ancients alone. He perceives a kind of perverse “glamour,” of “bondage” to the unknown (to return to Woolf’s words), lurking in any appreciation for

non-native literature, be it ancient or modern. So it is he that denounces all those who have been “seduced by the secret joy of reading works in a foreign language” (“séduits par la secrète joie qu’il y a de lire des ouvrages dans une langue étrangère”; 3:209).



In parallel with this critique of the *sensual* charms of the faraway, Perrault conducts an equally biting examination of the *sentimental* charms of childhood, equally associated with antiquity. He takes aim here at the more tender (though no less dangerous) affections excited by humanity’s first expressions of poetry and the arts. We have seen that the reversal in historical precedence operated by the new paradigm of antiquity as the “infancy of man” can prove to be a new weapon for the Ancients. In lieu of filial veneration for one’s elders, Ancient apologists can instead exploit the parental love of moderns for their beloved children, the ancients. It is yet another emotional tug for antiquity. In response, Perrault argues that this tug has overwhelmed the reason of his opponents. The puerility of Ancient poetry, which should, according to Perrault, call for critical censure, too often provokes an irrational parental affection, even admiration, from contemporaries:

The poetry of the ancients had all the marks and inherent qualities of childhood. Children speak simply and say only what first comes into their heads, without thinking about it. They almost always need someone to interpret or explain their words as soon as they speak of something difficult. One admires everything they say, as soon as it has a little something witty or reasonable. And, finally, one permits them all sorts of liberties.

[L]a poésie des anciens a eu toutes les marques et tous les apanages de l’enfance. Les enfants parlent simplement, et ne disent des choses que ce qui s’en présente d’abord à l’esprit, sans rien approfondir. Ils ont presque toujours besoin qu’on leur serve de truchement, dès qu’ils parlent d’une matière un peu difficile; on admire tout ce qu’ils disent, pour peu qu’il s’y trouve d’esprit et de raison; et enfin on leur souffre toutes sortes de libertés. (3:24)

The characterization of the Ancient party as overly permissive parents delighting in the babble of their prized imbeciles finds an even more colorful expression in *Le siècle*. Here the subject is ancient Greek music, not poetry, and Perrault explains how a primitive art manages to seduce:

So it is that when an infant, whose tongue tries first to utter,
 Begins to pronounce, makes some noise and a stutter,
 Then the mother who holds him finds her senses more charmed
 By two or three words he has hardly formed,
 Than by all the discourses full of art and science,
 That in public declaims the highest eloquence.

Ainsi lorsqu'un enfant dont la langue s'essaye
 Commence à prononcer, fait du bruit et bégaye,
 La mère qui le tient a ses sens plus charmés
 De trois ou quatre mots qu'à peine il a formés,
 Que de tous les discours pleins d'art et de science
 Que déclame en public la plus haute éloquence. (*Le siècle* 270)¹⁸

Perrault's derision of the childishness of the ancients, and the blind maternal affection of their defenders, should be placed in context. Despite the mocking tone here, Perrault had a complex relation with childhood. He is, after all, best known as the first published author (or literary adaptor) of such fairy tales as *Cinderella* or *Little Red Riding Hood*, texts which he in fact attributed to his young son. Nevertheless, Perrault lived in a pre-Rousseau age, when childhood was rarely idealized for its innate qualities, and his critique here must be read in this light. Tender affections for the infantile may have their time and place, but in matters of literary evaluation they can only cloud what should, for Perrault, be a matter of detached critical judgment.

For Perrault, the specious seductions of childhood are not limited to the instinctual call of parental affection; they also imbue the fond, hazy memories that readers may cherish of their own early years. And seventeenth-century education being what it was, that childhood was spent reading, reciting, and translating ancient literature. The Greeks and Romans profit immeasurably from this privileged place. For it is only natural, Perrault concedes, for adults to

conserve a love for the authors that they read when they were young, as for the places where they passed the first years of their lives, because these places and these authors bring back to mind the pleasant ideas of their youth.

conserv[er] un amour pour les auteurs qu'ils ont lus étant jeunes, comme pour les lieux où ils ont passé les premières années de leur vie; parce que ces lieux et ces auteurs leur remettent dans l'esprit les idées agréables de leur jeunesse (1:100).

Here Perrault exposes the Ancient partisans' odd sentimentality as a kind of homesickness for an idealized past, a childhood of reading and dreaming of books. They are victims of an insidious nostalgia.¹⁹ Perrault's remark is typical of his century—still that of Cervantes and his imitators—and its mockery of the quixotic infatuation with idealized literary fantasies. The intoxicating effects of youthful reading were indeed a major concern of the time. But the association between the love of poetry and the memories of childhood, between the time and place of reading and the imaginary journeys nourished by books, also suggests a future Romantic idealization of literature. And here Perrault prefigures the cool-headed Flaubert, depicting the *bovarisme* of Ancient partisans, for whom modernity is a provincial and prosaic Yonville, from which they can only escape through imaginary flights, fueled by youthful reading and bound toward their exotic Greek isles.

More broadly speaking, the most dangerous allure here concerns not just some personal nostalgic fantasies, but the past ages of unreason that humanity had only recently outgrown. I return to the recidivism of which Moderns accuse Ancient apologists, who seem all too ready to regress to pre-Cartesian puerility. Though La Motte would like to believe that it is impossible for the modern world to fall back into the Homeric “imbecility of infancy,” and though he scoffs at the idea that one might “claim to amuse grown men by the same fictions that would have charmed children,” he knows that in reality adulthood slips easily back to infancy's grip (*Discours* 22–23). It is Fontenelle who perhaps most keenly analyzes this enduring seduction. His essay “Sur la poésie en général” concludes its critique of paganism with a warning concerning the capacity of its childish marvels to still entrap our minds, “so easily do we fall back into our infancy” (*OC* 5:543). Faced with this ever-recurring human weakness, however, Fontenelle partially relents, and grudgingly allows for a separate space allotted to infantile unreason, which can be carefully indulged in scrupulously contained moments of leisure:

When men must conduct themselves with seriousness and weight, reason must be obeyed, and one does not indulge frivolity; but when they can behave like children, reason itself can happily play along with them.

Quand les hommes se portent pour graves et sérieux, la raison leur tient rigueur, et n'entend pas raillerie; mais quand ils ne se portent que pour enfants, elle joue volontiers elle-même avec eux. (*OC* 5:561)

In terms of literary pastimes, Fontenelle grants a certain licence for frolicsome irrationality to the lighter genres, to gallant lyrics, to humorous

verse, and no doubt even to the opera libretti that he himself penned. Everyone should understand that such entertainments are nothing but “bagatelles” meant for recreation, not edification. Furthermore, these genres are precisely those considered invented or perfected in modern times. If the Moderns must concede that progress cannot always rationalize poetry, then at least they can limit the contagion of unreason by unambiguously labeling its creations as mere childish pastimes. These lighter genres inherently display their own warning notice to the audience: *this is mere amusement, do not mistake it for more*.

The real trouble of course comes not from such trifles, but rather from high literary genres that confusingly combine the childish with the serious. The Greek epic is the prime example of such an insalubrious amalgam. Ancient apologists, enthralled by the infantile babbling of Homer, mistake it for moral and philosophical truth. They are lured by a prestigious genre that should, in its gravitas, never admit unreason; in epic poetry “this puerility” is “out of place.”²⁰ So it is, Fontenelle warns, that the “follies” of antiquity insinuate themselves into the modern world under the solemn mask of inspired poetry.

Moral Clarity and Didactic Design

Beyond the deleterious consequences for poetic economy already discussed, those ancient “follies” also have profound moral implications. The second part of this book mapped the social, political, and religious shock of the ancient; it is time to consider the aesthetic aspects of the Moderns’ moralizing position. Perrault and his heirs work from a commonplace of classical poetics according to which poetry must be morally instructive as well as pleasing. However, the age was conflicted in its understanding of the Horatian dictum of *utile dulci*. The disagreements began with this simple question: which is more important, the useful or the sweet? The Moderns—at least in regard to the elevated genres that could not be dismissed as mere recreational entertainment—opted for the absolute privileging of the moral above the amusing. The theoretician René Rapin, whose 1674 *Réflexions sur la Poétique d’Aristote* was an eclectic amalgam of proto-Ancient and proto-Modern positions, summed up this preference for propriety by claiming that pleasure was merely a “means” toward the ultimate end of all poetry: moral edification (22). He describes the instrumentality of literature and the arts in starkly utilitarian terms: poetry proves “useful [...] by the essential subordination that all arts must maintain to the political, whose end is the public good” (“utile [...] par la subordina-

tion essentielle, que tout art doit avoir à la politique, dont la fin générale est le bien public”; 20).

Such are the conceptual sources of Perrault’s efforts to have poetry serve “la bonne politique.” The Ancients, we will see, contest that instrumentality. They do so, however, quite prudently, never entirely willing to upset the delicate balance of *utile dulci*. The real debate centers instead on the specific applications of the moral requirements of poetry. In particular, the Moderns embrace an aesthetic triad that the Ancients will fiercely challenge. First comes the Moderns’ rigorous conception of decorum: art is to represent only an idealized selection of nature. Second is the requirement for moral clarity: when evil needs to be represented, the artist must clearly signal it and avoid all ethical ambiguity. Third and finally is the explicitly didactic economy of the work, constituted by a morally explicit plot structure, exemplary heroes, and a clearly discernable lesson.

The most general of these principles is that of the moral selection of content. The Moderns prefer an idealized, “belle nature” to “pure nature” itself (*Parallèle* 3:220). Poetry, according to Perrault, must follow philosophy’s proper goal of “taming and [...] correcting this pure nature which is always brutal” (“dompter et [...] corriger cette pure nature qui est toujours brutale”; 3:212). Raw nature, according to this view, is like raw food, it must be carefully prepared by the artist-chef in order to be digestible; those who love the crude realism of the ancients are like those who would “eat [...] their meat uncooked and unseasoned” (“manger [...] leur viande toute crue et sans sel”; 3:213). Realism for Perrault is not an aesthetic choice, but simply the result of incapacity or laziness. To copy life as it is, demands no art: “The great difficulty is not to represent objects well, but to represent beautiful objects, and to represent them from their most beautiful side” (“La plus grande difficulté ne consiste pas à bien représenter des objets, mais de représenter de beaux objets, et par les endroits où il sont les plus beaux”; 3:214). In his essay on pastoral, Fontenelle likewise takes up the charge against the perceived realism of the ancients. We return to the problem of the shepherd’s slap: “The extreme partisans of antiquity say that Theocritus wanted to depict nature as it is [...]. It is not simply a matter of depicting nature, it is necessary to depict objects which give pleasure to see” (“les partisans outrés de l’antiquité disent que Théocrite a voulu peindre la nature telle qu’elle est [...]. Il ne s’agit pas simplement de peindre, il faut peindre des objets qui fassent plaisir à voir”; *OC* 2:394–95). Of course, the pleasure here is conditioned by the moral approval of a refined modern audience; Fontenelle, like Perrault, ultimately assumes that the portrait must meet the highest moral demands, not the lowest; that is to

say, meet the approval of modernity, not antiquity.²¹ And to meet this approval, the selection of material demands fine sifting—and some draconian elimination. Far from a frank portrait, the poet must in fact intentionally dissimulate by disguising or filtering the depraved truth of nature; the poet is to reveal “only a half-truth,” to depict “only half of a thing. [...] one hides the base or mean part [...], one hides the wretchedness” (“que la moitié d’une chose [...] On dissimule la bassesse [...], on cache la misère”; 2:394). And of course, those things that have not even “half” a side appropriate for viewing are to be mercilessly purged. Some characters are simply too evil to represent. For La Motte, that which “shocks” must be cut: “on stage [...] one wants to see men, not monsters” (“au théâtre [...] l’on veut voir des hommes, et non pas des monstres”; “Discours à l’occasion de Romulus,” in *Textes critiques* 605, 598).

Nevertheless, the Moderns had to admit the necessity of some evil in literary depictions of life. What drama could there be without it? So when it could not be simply eliminated (or shown from its less offensive “side”), evil was to be clearly tagged for the unwary reader. This is the second great principle of the Moderns’ poetics of propriety: absolute precision in moral demarcations. Here contemporary literature clearly triumphed. As opposed to what Terrasson would later call the moral “chaos” of Homer’s ambiguous (at best) characters, Perrault lauds a recent French epic—Chapelain’s rendition of Joan of Arc, *La Pucelle*—for its stark “contrast” between a shining “perfect hero,” the Comte de Dunois, and a dark villain, the “très méchant” Duc de Bourgogne (*Parallèle* 3:251–52).²² Art must propose clear moral choices as stark as that between Virtue and Vice famously faced by Hercules: only such distinct dichotomies can “furnish a morality which the masters of art demand from such works so as to make them useful to the entire public” (“produit une moralité que les maîtres de l’art demandent dans ces sortes d’ouvrages pour les rendre utiles à tout le monde”; 3:251).

Perrault takes direct aim here at the moral ambiguity associated with Aristotle’s theory of the “flawed” hero. This ambiguity was of course frequently trumpeted by Ancient apologists like Racine, who claimed in the preface to *Andromaque* to follow the philosopher in creating characters who are decidedly not “perfect heroes” but, instead, “neither completely good, nor completely bad” (“ni tout à fait bons, ni tout à fait méchants”; *OC I*, 197–98). The imperfect hero is the lynchpin for the tragic effects of pity and fear, since, as Aristotle asserts, the fall of a perfectly good hero would simply provoke an audience’s outrage at injustice; only the flawed generate tragic pathos. Tragic pathos, however, is not the Moderns’ favorite literary emotion. They prefer admiration. Perrault first adumbrates this poetics of

virtuous exemplarity in the 1674 defense of Quinault's ameliorated version of *Alceste*. Perrault's model is undoubtedly Corneille, though he does not name the playwright in his polemic. Corneille famously declared himself the inventor of a new form of tragedy in the preface to his 1650 *Nicomède*, where he claimed that his flawless hero "somewhat violates the rules of tragedy in that he does not seek to provoke pity by his excessive misfortunes," but instead seeks "to provoke only admiration in the spectators" ("sort un peu des règles de la tragédie, en ce qu'il ne cherche point à faire pitié par l'excès de ses malheurs, mais [...] n'excite que de l'admiration dans l'âme du spectateur"; *OC* 2:641). Although one can debate, as we have seen, the meaning of the term "admiration" (which could refer to amoral awe as much as to ethical approval), in the decades after Corneille's declaration most critics took the view that Corneille had developed a new, edifying dramaturgy of heroic exemplarity.²³

Given the supposed modernity of this aesthetic of admiration, it is no surprise that Perrault seeks to align Quinault's opera, and modern moral art in general, with Corneille's tragedies. Perrault does so not only by making exemplarity, rather than tragic imperfection, the yardstick against which characters are to be measured, but furthermore by choosing the very Cornelian trait of magnanimity as his favored modern virtue. In language that explicitly echoes Corneille's famous formula from *Cinna*, Perrault repeatedly lauds Quinault's hero's "victory over himself."²⁴ And the hero's perfect virtue naturally leads to a happy ending that Perrault considers superior to the catastrophic denouements of tragic pathos. For "one of the greatest beauties of plays consists in the happy surprise concluding the action, and in the joy of being relieved, thanks to an ingenious denouement, of all the tensions and fears which the plot has stirred in us" ("[l']une des plus grandes beautés des pièces de théâtre, consiste dans la surprise agréable des événements, et dans la joie de se voir délivré par un dénouement ingénieux de l'embarras et l'inquiétude où nous a mis l'intrigue et le nœud de la pièce"; *Critique* 88).

As the last line suggests, nothing better bolsters moral clarity or brands virtue as valuable than a satisfying conclusion that rewards rectitude. As Oscar Wilde's Miss Prism opined, "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what fiction means." The Moderns were the Miss Prisms of the age—without, of course, Wilde's ironic distinction between fiction and reality. They intervened here in another hotly debated question of classical poetics, one that brings us to the third element of the Moderns' moral aesthetics: must the plot be driven toward a clear didactic aim? Corneille, despite certain of his proto-Modern views, had resisted such a requirement, arguing against the theoretical need to conclude with vice pun-

ished and virtue rewarded; in practice, however, he did concede that such a morally gratifying denouement was the surest way to please a contemporary audience.²⁵ His Modern heirs were more exigent. As Perrault's commentary above suggests, they consistently demanded morally comforting conclusions. It is thus no surprise that La Motte requires that evil characters die, or at least end in a state of "trouble and remorse that takes the place of torment or death" ("état de trouble et de remords qui leur tient lieu de supplice"); poetic justice must conform perfectly to an idealized "natural justice" ("Discours à l'occasion de Romulus," in *Textes critiques* 607).

It is left, however, to Jean Terrasson to elaborate the most theoretically sophisticated vindication of Modern didacticism. His 1715 *Dissertation critique*, we have seen, applies geometric rigor to establishing poetic principles; those principles are as moral as they are formal. Or, rather, the formal is itself moral, since the shape of the plot is designed to instill a virtuous lesson. Like Perrault and La Motte, Terrasson would prefer that evil be eliminated as much as possible from the stage and the page; the depiction of vices threatens to spread corruption, rendering the audience both "effeminate" and "brutal and bloodthirsty" (the unholy union of these two tendencies being a special hallmark of antiquity).²⁶ Yet, like his forerunners, he knows that vice must sometimes be represented in the interest of likeness and drama—but only under the condition that wickedness be meticulously marked as abhorrent.²⁷ And, of course, that it be duly punished.

In his theoretical rigor, however, Terrasson does somewhat nuance his paradigm for generic differences. He admits that the genre of tragedy, whose aim is to inspire pathos, may portray flawed heroes in order to engender pity and fear. But tragedy is for Terrasson anything but a model for other genres. It is the sole exception to the rule that heroes should be "essentially virtuous" and inspire the audience's admiration (*Dissertation* 1:278). The vexing problem of pity and terror belongs to one genre only. Hardly even to that one genre. For Terrasson argues that there has always been a "second" type of tragedy, which refuses to elicit pathos through an ambiguous central figure, but instead presents a "perfect hero" placed in conflict with a clearly defined villain. This second type of tragedy concludes with a satisfying double denouement featuring "the fall of the wicked and the deliverance of the good," and thus naturally offers the best and "simplest way to instruct men by examples."²⁸ Furthermore, Terrasson joins his fellow Moderns in congratulating Corneille for perfecting a tragic form that engenders morally edifying "admiration" (1:203). Modern tragedies could happily follow these superior alternatives to tragic pathos. And it is here that the rising form of opera excelled, depicting heroes who

were crowned by magnanimity and who had risen above the “ferocity and cruelty” of ancient heroes (1:250).

The genre best suited for the poetics of exemplarity, however, is epic: by its very nature, Terrasson contends, epic is designed to excite our admiration of heroic examples.²⁹ Homer is thus all the more inexcusable in his moral ambiguity. Though his heroes and gods are vicious, he “nevertheless proposes them as objects for our veneration and admiration” (1:148). Nothing so well illustrates this immorality than the epic’s conclusion. How could it be that the “essentially vicious” Achilles ends up not only alive but victorious? Terrasson notes that some might argue that Achilles has been punished enough by the untimely death of his beloved Patrocles. But Terrasson is intransigent. The didactic denouement is never to be compromised. No substitutions are allowed. “The wicked must be punished by their own death, and not by that of their friends” (“les méchants doivent être punis par leur propre mort, et non par celle de leurs amis”; 1:308). Achilles’ supposed “happy end” is proof that Homer has “aimed more to praise his hero than to blame him” (“a bien plus cherché à louer son héros qu’à le blâmer”; 1:315). Modern audiences naturally find this repellent. Indeed, they would delight at the demise of the wicked Achilles (1:301). As for Terrasson himself, he would gladly pardon Achilles if Homer had thought to make him a better man, but since he made his hero so pernicious, Terrasson can only exclaim, “I would have demanded his death both for the satisfaction and for the exemplary lesson” it would provide (“j’aurais demandé cette mort par raison de satisfaction et d’exemple”; 1:309–10). The poetics of propriety sometime require human sacrifice.

Allegory Undone

Given the plain turpitude of the *Iliad*, how could it have met with such approval over so many centuries, and continue to meet with it in modern times? After all, there certainly were better models available. The epic progressed radically, Terrasson asserts, in the more enlightened ages after Homer: the *Aeneid* is vastly more moral, and Fénelon’s recent *Télémaque* is the most edifying epic known to man (1:280, 275). In typical Modern fashion, Terrasson attributes Homer’s odd survival in part to the sway of outmoded authority; most critics, even Horace, are simply too “prejudiced” and “lazy” to contest tradition (1:148).

But are all admirers of Homer so infatuated with authority that they are left totally blind to vice? Given the sophistication of the Ancient apologists, even the Moderns had to admit the implausibility of such a claim.

There exists for the admirers of Homer, however, another shelter. It consists, the Moderns claim, of a kind of diversionary tactic. Faced with the improper and the immoral, most admirers simply choose to see something else. If the text troubles, they read around it, under it, or above it. How can you believe ancient poetry is morally good? Make it say something other than what it does. Even the opposite. In short, read it as *allegory*.

The Moderns attack such allegorical justifications, designed to uncover the esoteric moral truths hidden in Homer, as pure mystification. They challenge here a tradition dating back to the earliest Greek commentaries of the Pythagorean school, elaborated by later neo-Platonists such as Porphyry and Proclus, and transmitted (notably by the twelfth-century Eustathius of Thessalonica) to Renaissance humanists.³⁰ But a much more recent work had come to reinforce and modernize the allegorical tradition. In 1675, Le Bossu published his *Traité du poème épique*, a kind of unified theory of the epic that would exercise substantial influence across Europe for decades to come. The treatise has a simple argument. The epic is by nature moral, and it is moral by means of allegory. “The epic is a discourse artfully invented in order to shape morals through lessons that are disguised under the allegory of an important action narrated in verse” (“L’épopée est un discours inventé avec art, pour former les mœurs par des instructions déguisées sous les allégories d’une action importante, qui est racontée en vers”; 14). In other words, the epic is a kind of apologue, a fable of the Aesopian sort. Though the *Iliad* may be much longer and more complex than *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, Le Bossu asserts that it results from the same singular moral intention of the poet. This intention alone determines the overall economy of the epic, as well as all its various episodes and adornments.

We recognize here the poet-architect of geometricized art, one whose univocal design guarantees unity and clarity.³¹ In the case of the *Iliad*, Le Bossu summarizes that unity in a precise formula: “Homer [...] took as the basis for his fable this great truth, that discord among princes ruins their own states” (“Homère [...] pris pour le fond de sa fable, cette grande vérité, que la mésintelligence des princes ruine leurs propres états”; 46). Having established his moral thesis, the epic poet now has only to determine the clearest and most methodic means to demonstrate its truth. According to Le Bossu, Homer finds that demonstration in a Trojan narrative sequenced in simple logical steps: first, internal conflict erupts between Achilles and Agamemnon; in consequence, military losses mount for the discordant Greeks; third, following Patrocles’ death, Achilles and Agamemnon reconcile; finally, the reunited Greeks, profiting from concord, triumph over Hector and Troy. Beyond this grand schema, the poet crafts various sub-

plots and supplementary characters in a similarly ordered fashion, strictly adhering in all points to this moralizing plan and its ethical corollaries.³²

Le Bossu's theory appears at first glance to present a real challenge to the Moderns. He appropriates their own ideal of the rigorous poet-philosopher in order to paradoxically justify an ancient form, allegory, often associated with occult nonsense and arbitrary interpretations. The *Traité* aims to disarm the long philosophical resistance to allegory, dating back to Plato's attack in the *Republic* on such figurative justifications of Homer. If the epic poet was hiding metaphorical moral truths under the literal iniquity of his tale, then, Plato argued, he hid them too well to be discerned. In France, both Rabelais and Montaigne had also mocked the more ludicrous claims of such allegorical mysteries. Yet they did so with playful irony and deep ambivalence; they were not yet ready to abandon the lure of esoteric meaning.³³ The rising rationalism of the seventeenth century, however, presented a more powerful critique of allegory. As early as 1604, Francis Bacon denounced the irrational "vanity" of obscurantist critics who sought a nonexistent hidden "inwardness" in ancient poets such as Homer.³⁴ But it was certainly Spinoza who offered the most sustained argument against such interpretative license. As we have seen, his 1670 *Theological-Political Treatise* posits that ancient Hebrew prophets (considered to be contemporaneous with the first ancient profane poets such as Homer) wrote in a prephilosophical world, and were nourished by imagination, not methodical reason. Nothing would thus be more absurdly anachronistic than to attribute to such poets and prophets, by means of convoluted figurative interpretations, the kind of advanced philosophical truths (whether scientific or moral) to which they did not yet have access.³⁵

The terrain was thus well prepared for the Moderns to demolish allegorical apologies for Homer. D'Aubignac had derided the whole tradition in his unpublished *Conjectures*, but it was Fontenelle who most explosively took on the topic in his 1683 *New Dialogues of the Dead*, aiming his arrows straight at Le Bossu's *Traité* of the previous decade. In an Elysian conversation pairing Homer with Aesop, Homer begins by praising the fabulist precisely for the kind of meticulously designed craftwork that Le Bossu and the Moderns thought essential to creating valid allegories. The epic poet lauds Aesop for his "art" in judiciously hiding moral instructions under such appropriately chosen stories.³⁶ Flattered, Aesop returns the compliment—but to an utterly flabbergasted Homer:

Aesop: I am delighted to be praised on this art by you, who so well mastered it.

Homer: Me? I never took credit for such a thing.

Esope: Il m'est bien doux d'être loué sur cet art, par vous qui l'avez si bien entendu.

Homère: Moi? je ne m'en suis jamais piqué. (Fontenelle, *OC* 1:67)

Fontenelle pulls the rug out, so to speak, from under Le Bossu's system. It rested on the foundation of a poet-architect whose methodic design guarantees moral clarity. Once Homer's philosophical intention is subtracted from the equation, the allegory is bankrupt. We are left with a mess of an epic poem whose vagueness and contradictions allow infinite, and entirely arbitrary, interpretations. Aesop himself must admit that although commentators attributed to Homer every form of veiled meaning—moral, theological, scientific, mathematical—they could never agree on which one precisely was concealed in any single passage; indeed, “where one saw a moral meaning, another found a scientific one.”³⁷ Naturally, such contradictory interpretations prove the fundamental disorder of the text interpreted: as La Motte remarked, a clearly designed work allows for no divergence in reading; its transparent meaning cannot be mistaken by even the most “mediocre mind” (*Textes critiques* 305). It is the great virtue of Aesop's work that it meets this requirement. Here again, Fontenelle turns a favored ancient (Aesop) against a disfavored one (Homer). The Moderns did, after all, find much to like in the fabulist's works. His moral lessons are unequivocal, and the fables are economically designed to illustrate them. The relationship between the literal and allegorical is thus exact and verifiable. There is nothing occult here.³⁸ Furthermore his morals conform perfectly to the rudimentary knowledge of his time. There is nothing anachronistic in a didactic reading of the *Boy Who Cried Wolf*.

Homer, of course, fails both these tests. This appears to be the final stroke for the epic poet. As Aesop says of the cruelty of Homeric heroes and the absurdity of their gods: “What, can all this have been good without allegory?” (“Quoi, tout cela eût été bon sans allégorie?”; 1:67–68). The answer is of course that it cannot. Fontenelle's dialogue thus creates a deadly syllogism: The Homeric epic, whose literal sense is immoral, can only be justified through allegory; yet it does not fit the requirements of legitimate allegory; therefore it cannot be justified.

The Moderns closely follow the path hewn by Fontenelle. Less than a decade later, Perrault devotes considerable time in his *Parallèle* to disproving Le Bossu's theory. If we truly put to the test the notion that Homer's unique intention was to demonstrate that “the discord of princes ruins their own states,” then an analysis of the plot shows that the poet could not possibly have intended to execute such a moral design. Perrault's evidence? First, the Greek armies do not especially suffer during their period

of discord, doing no worse than the Trojans on the battlefield. And second, if Homer had wished to show that internal reconciliation leads to triumph, then it follows that he would have had the Greeks, well, triumph. But they are far from taking Troy at the end of the epic. Perrault concludes:

We can thus conclude that the beautiful morality that some have discerned in the *Iliad* was never conceived by Homer, who had enough wits to have made it clearer, if he indeed had the design of making it discernible.

On peut donc conclure que la belle moralité que quelques-uns croient voir dans l'*Iliade*, n'a jamais été pensée par Homère, qui avait trop d'esprit pour ne la pas mieux faire sentir, s'il avait eu dessein qu'elle s'y trouvât. (*Parallèle* 3:44)

Here again, Perrault criticizes the lack of “economy” in the epic. His examination reveals an epic bereft of both aesthetic coherence and a clear message. The moral and the formal are indeed interdependent. Stripped of allegorical nonsense, Homer is exposed in his primitive nudity. Or, as La Motte would later suggest, the epic poet is abandoned to himself:

If Homer were to be abandoned to his natural and literal meaning, then his frequent absurdities would trouble his adorers. They have to seek comfort by other means. They thus seek a mysterious meaning at any price, and thanks to an artificially forced allegory, they turn into profound beauty the very faults that leap to your eyes.

Si l'on abandonnait Homère à son sens naturel et littéral, ses absurdités fréquentes troubleraient ses adorateurs. Il faut bien qu'ils se soulagent par quelque voie. Ils cherchent donc un sens mystérieux à quelque prix que ce puisse être, et à la faveur d'une allégorie forcée ils tournent en beautés profondes les défauts mêmes qui sautent aux yeux. (*Textes critiques* 342)

The Moderns had done their work well. Homer, as Terrasson predicted, appeared to be “wrecked” upon the shores of modern method. Deprived of allegorical obfuscations, the Ancients had to defend the text alone, based on its literal value. Or they had to find another avenue for “mysterious meaning” that might withstand the scrutiny of the modern world. They did both, renovating—indeed modernizing in surprising ways—some ancient notions of the power of poetry.

11 * The Ineffable Effect

The Counter-economy of the Sublime

In the preface to his tremendously successful 1715 translation of the *Iliad*, Alexander Pope praised the epic as a “wild Paradise” of poetic abundance. The dense luxuriousness of the poem, Pope argued, often made it difficult to perceive any underlying method that might order it, in contrast to Virgil’s *Aeneid*, which he somewhat unflatteringly compared to a symmetrically organized modern garden. By the time Pope wrote these lines—as the quarrel was experiencing its final episode—he could not be unaware of the provocative nature of his praise. He was far too conversant with the French polemics of the past half-century, and with the Moderns’ insistence on methodical design and clarity, not to clearly understand that the terms he used in applauding the poem—those of an untamed wilderness—were ones that Perrault and Terrasson would use to deride its crudeness and disorder. Yet rather than refute their objections, Pope doubled down, so to speak, on the wager first made decades earlier by Ancient partisans such as Boileau and Longepierre. These two apologists, far from a Le Bossu attempting to render Homer more Cartesian, embraced instead the nonrational quality of ancient poetry, its proximity to a prephilosophical world more fertile in poetic imagination. And though these earlier French critics did so with prudent reserve, the success of their efforts can, we will see, be gauged from Pope’s winning adoption of their claims.

The key to the Ancients’ defiant response to the new rationalist aesthetics is to be found in Boileau’s translation of the then largely neglected Greek treatise, traditionally attributed to Longinus, known as *On the Sublime*. The translation, which included a highly original critical preface to the work, returns us to that crucial year in the prologue to the quar-

rel, 1674. As the polemics over Euripides' *Alceste* were pitting Perrault against Racine, Boileau entered the fray by publishing the *Traité du sublime* alongside his *Art poétique*. Each of Boileau's two critical works performed important yet distinct missions. The *Art poétique* rehearsed the basic principles of poetics inherited from Horace and Aristotle and digested by Renaissance humanists. Aimed at winning over the common sense of the leisured reading public, the poem offered an elegantly modulated form of classicism: it counterbalanced the needs of method and regularity with a forceful defense of instinct, inspiration, and genius; it likewise mitigated demands concerning the utility of literature by valorizing the autonomous pleasures and passions specific to poetry, regardless of their moral or philosophical application to the outside world. Through this equilibrium, the *Art poétique* constituted an effort to claim the center ground in matters of poetry, and thus to sideline the early Modern movement by slyly containing—without entirely subverting—the contemporary dictates of rationalism and didacticism.

With the *Traité du sublime*, however, Boileau entered into a more audacious defense of the apparently unmethodical, even obscure and shocking, aspects of ancient literature. He turned from the mainstream tradition of Horatian and Aristotelian criticism to the considerably less canonical Longinus. And even here he turned the traditional reading of Longinus's work—that of a rhetorical manual for the orator—on its head.¹ The key innovation of Boileau's approach, as adumbrated in the preface, is to define the sublime not as a mere (albeit the highest) register of rhetoric, but instead as something radically different, even rhetoric's opposite: as the ineffable power of language that by nature escapes the logical bounds of rhetorical production and analysis. The sublime becomes in Boileau's hands a type of supernatural force vested in poetry, "the marvel inside language" ("le merveilleux dans le discours"). It adds to the common use of words an indefinable supplement. That fifth dimension, so to speak, of language naturally produces the *emotional* effect we associate with the sublime, one that is less a comforting pleasure than a violent force: the sublime, Boileau exults, "carries away, ravishes, transports" the reader ("enlève, ravit, transporte"; preface to *Traité du sublime*, in *OC* 338). But it also produces an equally forceful, if mysterious, *cognitive* effect. It gives added value to literal meaning. By transcending mere denotation, the sublime awakens an understanding that cannot itself be understood: it "makes us conceive of many things beyond what the [words] appear to say" ("nous fait concevoir beaucoup de choses au-delà de ce qu'elles semblent dire"; 551).

The supplemental, even somewhat occult, meaning created by the sublime cannot but recall the hidden one produced by allegory. The fact that

the Moderns had so effectively undermined the latter only added luster to the former. It is not, however, that Boileau entirely abandoned allegory. He devoted considerable attention to the trope in the *Art poétique*; yet, as earlier noted, his apology for allegory is strictly limited to its effective narrative use in concretizing abstraction and embellishing verse.² In the *Art poétique*, Boileau carefully avoids employing allegory for occult philosophical and moral justifications; he furthermore refuses to elaborate any comprehensive reading of the economy of the Homeric epic as a meticulously engineered allegorical apologue. Boileau is no Le Bossu. Indeed, his tightly circumscribed apology for allegorical figures is often little more than a celebration of their literal value as fictional devices. To say that “Venus is beauty” hardly reveals a mysterious sense transcending the letter of the text. More convoluted and abstruse allegorical interpretations, Boileau well understood, hardly conformed to the contemporary taste for clarity.

There is thus a reason why the Ancients were known as the party of the Sublime, and *not* the party of Allegory. The Moderns clearly understood that Boileau had ceded crucial ground in the latter territory, as did many of the future Ancient apologists.³ As Fénelon remarked in his defense of ancient poetry in the 1715 *Lettre à l'Académie*, Homer's use of mythical figures should be considered good fiction, not esoteric figuration:

I do not believe [...] that Homer put in his poems the most profound politics, or the purest morality, or the most sublime theology. [...] In vain have the Platonic philosophers [...] imagined allegories and profound mysteries in the divinities that Homer depicted. These mysteries are chimeras [...]. He painted with lifelike directness, grace, power, majesty, and passion. What more could one want?

Je ne crois point [...] qu'Homère a[it] mis dans ses poèmes la plus profonde politique, la plus pure morale, et la plus sublime théologie. [...] En vain les platoniciens [...] ont imaginé des allégories et de profonds mystères dans les divinités qu'Homère dépeint. Ces mystères sont chimériques [...]. Il a peint avec naïveté, grâce, force, majesté, passion. Que veut-on de plus? (*Œuvres* 2:1196)

What more, indeed, was needed than such vivid poetry, read with an innocent eye to the literal text? Fénelon adumbrates here a justification, both formally and morally, of Homer's unadorned naturalism, of the power of his epic canvas to transport readers to his own times, customs, and beliefs. It is a defense, we will see, widely embraced by the Ancients.

Nevertheless, to explain some of the very qualities that Fénelon associates with poetry—its “grace” (a formidably metaphysical concept in itself),

its “power,” its “passion”—Ancient apologists inevitably still yearned for some sort of secret virtue that might differentiate high literary expression from common prosaic language, and thus exempt poetry from the demands of modern method. The great gift of the sublime was that it offered distinct advantages, unavailable to allegory, that effectively countered, or at least skirted, these demands. First, it dodged rational analysis, and thus left the Moderns disarmed. Second, it accorded with the rigor of neoclassical simplicity and clarity while paradoxically embracing the concrete materiality, sonorous sensuality and even elegant obscurity of language. And finally, against the demands of an architecturally meticulous design, it vindicated the notions of instinctual genius and of a certain graceful *disorder* (“le beau désordre”). The Ancient party’s cultivation of each of these advantages will help transform literary criticism, and they demand examination.

I have suggested how Boileau exploits the first of these advantages: the sublime, according to his bold redefinition, is not a rhetorical device that can be analyzed and verified.⁴ There can be no how-to manual for the sublime. Unlike allegory and other tropes, it is not grounded in a schematized relationship, logically mapped, between a literal sense and a figurative sense. All the methodical demonstrations in the world, as effective as they might be in demolishing allegory, cannot touch it, for “the sublime is not, properly speaking, a thing that can be proved or demonstrated; instead [...] it is a wonder that seizes, strikes, makes itself felt” (“le sublime n’est pas proprement une chose qui se prouve et qui se démontre; mais [...] c’est un merveilleux qui saisit, qui frappe, et qui se fait sentir”; *OC* 546).

In making “itself felt” the “wonder” of the sublime creates not only an emotional effect, but also, as earlier suggested, a certain cognitive effect. Yet it is one of the mysteries of the sublime that this cognitive effect cannot be reduced to the apprehension of a precise, identifiable truth. Unlike allegory (as construed at the time), the sublime is not designed to reveal distinct morsels of moral, theological, or scientific philosophy. It does not instruct, persuade, or demonstrate. But neither is it simply a frivolous pleasure.⁵ It suggests a profound revelation, but one that surpasses any idea that can be translated into prose or clearly diagrammed. Its secret operations can only be compared to lightning. Boileau translates Longinus thus: “quand le sublime vient à éclater où il faut, il renverse tout comme un foudre” (“When the sublime has burst forth where it should, it overwhelms everything like lightning”; 342). And like the divine thunderbolt, the sublime’s immediate effect is not to advance a limpid argument, but instead to expand the mind’s undefined bounds: “the world in its entirety is not sufficient for the vastness of the human mind. Our thoughts often go beyond the heavens, and they exceed the borders that surround and enclose

all matter” (“le monde entier ne suffit pas à la vaste étendue de l’esprit de l’homme. Nos pensées vont souvent plus loin que les cieux, et pénètrent au-delà de ces bornes qui environnent et qui terminent toutes choses”).⁶

It might be observed that the metaphysical vagueness of this last line reveals the evident limitations of the sublime as an effective riposte to the Moderns. Indeed, Boileau’s reading of Longinus does not really intend to defeat the claims of rationalist aesthetics on their own terrain. It simply shifts the battle to an entirely different field, one “beyond the heavens.” Allegorical justifications could be logically refuted. But the sublime could not be disproved. What exactly was there to disprove? Nothing—or, more precisely, “a certain something,” an indefinable secret called the *je ne sais quoi*, which can be neither demonstrated by logic nor thereby dismantled.



The notion of the ineffable and its poetic and aesthetic ramifications furnish the sublime with the second great advantage—or, rather, series of advantages—that elevates it above allegory. First, the ineffability of the sublime allows the Ancients to lay claim to their own particular brand of exacting poetic economy. How? The sublime’s inexpressible force depends, according to Boileau, entirely on its uncanny condensation and crystallization of meaning, on its mysterious concision. As he repeatedly stresses in his preface to the *Traité*, the sublime is by definition “simple” and “natural” (337, 340). It flees pomposity and prolixity.⁷ Thus Boileau chooses as canonical examples of the sublime two of the most laconic of poetic formulae from ancient and modern literature: for antiquity, the “fiat lux” of Genesis, and for modernity, the three-syllable “Qu’il mourût” (“That he die”) from Corneille’s *Horace*.⁸ Whether expressing the cosmological mystery of creation, or the patriotic passion of a father desiring his son’s heroic death, these phrases are as austere as they are awe-inspiring. In the face of the Moderns’ mockery of the rambling verbosity of ancient texts, Boileau could here effectively adopt the neoclassical mantle of sober simplicity.

It is a shrewd move, for Boileau’s sublime, though in keeping with the contemporary taste for economic brevity, is in fact profoundly opposed to the kind of denotative exactitude and transparency favored by the Moderns.⁹ Its concision is not so much limpid as mysterious. Or, rather its surface clarity merely veils its profound obscurity. Indeed, in one of his most audacious moves, Boileau embraces that last term, so disparaged in neoclassical criticism. In the analysis of Genesis in his later *Réflexions critiques* on Longinus, he asserts that the words “fiat lux” (“Que la lumière se fasse”) not only “have something magnificent,” but also that their “ma-

jestic and elegant obscurity makes us conceive of things beyond what they appear to say.”¹⁰ The “obscurity” in question is admittedly nuanced by two key qualifiers: it is “elegant,” and thus formally succinct and graceful; and it is “majestic,” and thus fitting for the grand genres. The latter qualification is capital, since the ineffable, the *je ne sais quoi* as it was then being celebrated by critics such as Bouhours, could easily be applied to the charms of light social amusements—to mere fashion and flirtation.¹¹ If we can consider Boileau’s sublime a subcategory of the broader notion of the ineffable, he scrupulously isolates it as a distinctly elevated one.

And as one that is fundamentally literary—and particularly poetic. Although Boileau himself follows Longinus in comparing the sublime in words to the sublime in the world—in nature to volcanoes and lightning, in morals to heroic valor—Boileau’s true subject is clear: it is the “marvel of language.” This emphasis on language leads him to defend the irreducible materiality of words. In opposition to Perrault’s preference for the transparent translation, Boileau prefers the original in its linguistic corporality. Indeed, the sublime, emanating from its precise verbal form, is often simply untranslatable. In the ninth *Réflexion*, Boileau enters into a broad analysis of the characteristic idiosyncrasies that define languages. In particular, he defends the use of “lowly” or “base” words in Greek and Latin by arguing for the peculiar constitution of these tongues and by asserting their fundamental differences from modern languages. “Ass” (*âne*) is unpoetic in French; but *asinus* never shocks in Latin (533). Words are not merely abstract mathematical symbols; they are shaped and colored by their usage, by the cultural conditions of the language in question (Boileau cites the rustic simplicity of antiquity, which admitted fewer distinctions between high and low diction) and by the special character and music of their sounds.¹² The sublime power of poetry depends thus on its historical linguistic context and its sonorous sensuality. Speaking of Virgil’s and Homer’s use of apparently rustic diction, Boileau remarks, “these terms, although noble and sweet to the ear in their original language, would be base and gross once translated into French” (“ces termes, quoique si nobles et si doux à l’oreille, en leur langue, seraient bas et grossiers étant traduits un jour en français”; 533).

Here is one reason why the Moderns, according to Boileau, lack the capacity to experience the ancient sublime: they have no understanding of the ancient languages from which it emanates. Perrault, Boileau asserts, reads only poor translations that can never capture the unique incarnation, the singular crystallization, of the sublime (525). But the problem is not just bad translations. For Boileau goes so far as to assert that his own translations, as faithful and elegant as they may be, cannot “make one feel all the

power of the original, whose beauty consists primarily in the number, arrangement, and magnificence of the words.”¹³

The Ancient position is of course not fundamentally opposed to translation. Indeed, it is the Ancients who consistently produced translations of the classics (witness Boileau’s translation of Longinus), as opposed to the kind of corrective adaptations and censored revisions penned by the Moderns. Boileau, Longepierre, Dacier, all believed that shards of the sublime could be relayed through a translation, so long as it remained sensitive to the form, pathos, and genius of the original. But the partisans of antiquity practiced this art with a somewhat melancholic lucidity concerning its limits. They mourned what is lost in translation.

In the years between Boileau’s translation of Longinus and his later *Réflexions*, one of the leading translators of the age pondered this problem. I return to Longepierre. We have already seen how his praise of Theocritus’s sublime language and its “inexpressible beauties” provoked Perrault’s derision of the ineffable and its obfuscations. As for the specific episode in question, the shepherd’s slap, Longepierre, like Boileau, claimed that ancient Greek had an inherent (and unique) ability to speak of lowly things, even of such a base action, with elegance.¹⁴ For Longepierre, this quality borders on the untranslatable: in the same passage where “an author is charming in his language, [...] he will be barbarous in another.”¹⁵ The obstacle, however, extends well beyond the mere issue of coarseness. More generally speaking, given that the “principal beauty” of poetry resides in language, Longepierre at times seems to despair of his own vocation; how can a translator ever render the original with the same sublime inspiration that presided over its creation (*Discours* 115–17)? All great poems have a mysterious “vivacité” linked to their native language and “le génie et l’enthousiasme” of the poet. In marked contrast, the translated text, which aims only to accurately reproduce what has already been said, can at best be considered a work of dry “judgment” and exactitude. In these linguistic copies, Longepierre laments, “reason represses the fire of imagination.”¹⁶

That, of course, is just the kind of *repression*—the reining in of “imagination” by “reason”—that the Moderns celebrate as salutary. The methodical order they prize is indeed the work of what Longepierre might call a mere translator, in this case, the translator of clear and distinct ideas into instrumental language. The successful writer for Perrault is one who renders the “original” abstract design and philosophical message (the Moderns’ highest ambition for literature) through the mundane medium of linguistic sounds and figures. Here the sublime inverts the hierarchy adopted by the Moderns. For Perrault, language merely clothed and adorned the higher “intellectual and spiritual” essence of the work. But in the frame-

work of the sublime, the sensorial and figurative elements of language themselves generate the highest meaning. The medium is no longer simply decorative; it is determinative.

This neo-Longinian inversion of values equally shifts the criteria for evaluating the creative act. The poet is no longer principally esteemed for the rigorous implementation, through the instrument of language, of an abstractly conceptualized structure, but instead for the nonrational faculties that breathe a secret life into the medium itself: forceful imagination, fiery inspiration, instinctual mastery. Hence Longepierre's preference, already attested, for the fertile Greek inventor rather than for the disciplined Latin imitator. He admits that Virgil's poetry may be more "more discreet, more polished, more exact, and always wise and judicious" ("plus retenu, plus limé, plus exact, toujours sage et judicieux"). Yet he prefers Theocritus's more daring ("plus hardi") flights of fancy: the Greek poet spurns systematic regularity and "always abandons himself to the beauty of his own genius" ("s'abandonne toujours à la beauté de son génie"; *Théocrite* 36).



Longepierre's celebration of "genius" leads us to the third great advantage of the sublime. Whereas allegory, at the time, had come to depend on the rigorous schematizing of a depersonalized writer-architect, the sublime results from the instinctual force of a highly individualized poet. In contrast to the Moderns' poet in the Cartesian isolation of the philosopher's "stove," the sublime genius is a flesh-and-blood human nourished by the world in which he or she lives. Longinus, for example, conceives of Homer as a man shaped by his biographical experience. The poet's two distinct epics mirror two equally distinct phases of his life: the martial *Iliad* springs from the noontime "vigor" of his youth, while the later, more mellow *Odyssey* reflects the golden rays cast, like the setting sun, by the "genius of old age."¹⁷ The sublime poet is further humanized through his organic relationship to his own milieu, whose beliefs and customs cultivated his creativity. We have already seen the Ancient apologists' repeated celebration of Homer as a man fully rooted in his simpler, if cruder, epoch. Longinus reinforces this equation of the man with his times by wedding the particular ardor of Homer's genius to the military passions of the age he portrays. "Homer is himself heroic when he paints a hero." The poet's inspirational "fury" here becomes likened to the rage rising from his wrathful warriors, whom Homer, like a wind at their backs, pushes forward into the field.¹⁸ Boileau echoes Longinus's view of Homer as a characteristic hero of his time by comparing Longinus himself to such a hero, one whose fierce no-

bility Boileau illustrates in a biographical sketch rife with tragic grandeur. Longinus is the very thing he describes: “his sentiments have that indescribable something that marks not only a sublime spirit, but also a spirit vastly superior to the common” (“ses sentiments ont je ne sais quoi qui marque non seulement un esprit sublime, mais une âme fort élevée au-dessus du commun”; 336).

The heroic nature of the poet, however, necessarily entails some heroic faults. Sublime creators, moved by epic passions and inspired transports, cannot be expected to bow to the paltry dictates of fastidious critics. Longinus explains that mighty spirits of the past inevitably broke the rules “because their mind, which studied only the greatest matters, could not bother with petty things” (“parce que leur esprit qui ne s’étudiait qu’au grand, ne pouvait pas s’arrêter aux petites choses”; *OC* 386). It is a small price to pay for genius. As the heading of one chapter puts it, “the faults of the sublime can be excused” (“les fautes dans le sublime se peuvent excuser”; 390). Indeed, a certain disorder is not only excusable; it is in fact a virtue, if a nobly perilous one. Boileau translates what is perhaps the most provocative passage in Longinus, at least from the vantage point of neo-classical aesthetics, as follows:

As for me, I hold that greatness, which is above the ordinary, naturally does not have the purity of mediocrity. Indeed, in a neatly trimmed and polished work, one must fear a kind of lowliness. The sublime is a kind of immense richness, where one cannot pay close attention to everything, and where one cannot help neglecting some things. In contrast, it is in general almost impossible for low and mediocre minds to make mistakes; since they never risk anything and never raise themselves up to the heights, they always remain in perfect surety. On the other hand, the great in and of itself, by its own greatness, is slippery and dangerous.

Je tiens pour moi, qu’une grandeur au-dessus de l’ordinaire, n’a point naturellement la pureté du médiocre. En effet, dans un discours si poli et si limé, il faut craindre la bassesse: et il en est de même du sublime que d’une richesse immense, où l’on ne peut pas prendre garde à tout de si près, et où il faut malgré qu’on en ait, négliger quelque chose. Au contraire il est presque impossible, pour l’ordinaire, qu’un esprit bas et médiocre fasse des fautes; car comme il ne se hasarde et ne s’élève jamais, il demeure toujours en sûreté; au lieu que le grand de soi-même, et par sa propre grandeur, est glissant et dangereux. (Chapter 27, p. 386)

For the Moderns, mediocrity’s supposed success was the measure of method: the latter was so universally effective that even the untalented could, through

its guidance, surpass an untrained talent. Armed with the sublime, the Ancients can now reply: method is perfectly fit for mediocrity, yes, but *only* for mediocrity. Genius proudly scorns its flat regularity and timorous “surety.” And if genius prefers to mount the perilous peaks of the sublime, a few slips along the way only reveal the grandeur of inspiration.¹⁹

Longinus’s praise of the defiantly *irregular* left a deep mark on Boileau, one that surfaces even in the more temperate language of his *Art poétique*. Although the opening homage to instinctual inspiration is quickly nuanced by praise for reason and studied care, the poem later veers toward the more unruly side of the sublime. Boileau does so, naturally enough, when turning to the most ancient of poets, Homer.²⁰ “Instructed by nature,” rather than poetic treatises, Homer’s epic is a lush “fertile treasure” in which “his subject arranges itself and explains itself, without maintaining a methodical order in the verses” (“Sans garder dans ses vers un ordre méthodique, / Son sujet de soi-même et s’arrange et s’explique”; 176). Not only does Boileau eliminate “methodical order” from his poetic ideal, but, along with it, he effaces the presence of the methodically ordering architect. The poem appears to be born of itself, organically producing and “arranging itself.” It is a model of instinctual creation that could easily be characterized at the time as shockingly haphazard. What is most surprising is that in yet another passage of the *Art poétique*, Boileau departs so boldly from neoclassical order as to embrace a creative force that appears to be the exact opposite of design: chance itself. Speaking of the freewheeling genre of the ode, Boileau writes, “its *impetuous* style often proceeds by *chance*: its *beautiful disorder* is an effect of art” (“Son style *impétueux* souvent marche *au hasard*. / Chez elle un *beau désordre* est un effet de l’art”; 164; italics mine).

Boileau’s admiration for the oxymoronic *beau désordre* will be highly influential in the coming quarrel. Of course, the final reassuring reference to guiding “art” appears to shrewdly minimize the risks posed by the poet’s impetuosity. Or does it? The delicate balance of contending terms is not easily resolved. Indeed, one might well ask if, rather than containing and controlling inspired “impetuosity” and unruly “chance” through conscious “art,” the lines actually enlarge the definition of “art” to embrace “impetuosity” and “chance.” The question simmered for years. Agitated by Boileau’s praise of the Greek ode, the Moderns riposted. When Perrault’s *Parallèle* turns to the ode, he mocks the chaotic enthusiasm of that form, aiming his deadliest darts at Pindar, whose supposedly sublime disorder he labels as simply incomprehensible.²¹ Perrault’s scorn encourages Boileau to formulate, in his 1693 *Discours sur l’ode*, his most forceful defense of the *beau désordre* and its unmethodical genesis. After reasserting the inherently linguistic materiality of the sublime and its near untranslatability,²² Boi-

leau doubles down on his earlier praise of the ode's capriciousness, while blasting Perrault:

This critic, according to all appearances, is not convinced of the precept concerning the ode that I advanced in my *Art poétique*: "Its impetuous style often proceeds by chance: its beautiful disorder is the work of art." This precept, which makes *a rule of sometimes disregarding the rules, is a mystery of art*, which is not easily understood by a man without any taste, who believes that [Madeleine de Scudéry's] *Clélie* and our operas are models of the sublime genre, and who finds Terence insipid, Virgil dull, and Homer always wrong [...]. I have [...] tried] to make an ode in the manner [of Pindar], that is to say, full of *movements and transports* where the mind appears to be *led more by the demon of poetry than guided by reason*.

Ce critique, selon toutes les apparences, n'est pas fort convaincu du précepte que j'ai avancé dans mon *Art poétique*, à propos de l'ode.

Son style *impétueux* souvent marche *au hasard*;
Chez elle un *beau désordre* est un effet de l'art.

Ce précepte effectivement qui *donne pour règle de ne point garder quelquefois de règles, est un mystère de l'art*, qu'il n'est pas aisé de faire entendre à un homme sans aucun goût, qui croit que la *Clélie* et nos opéras sont les modèles du genre sublime; qui trouve Térence fade, Virgile froid, Homère de mauvais sens [...]. J'ai [...] tâché de faire une ode en français à [l]a manière [de Pindare], c'est-à-dire, pleine de mouvements et de transports, où l'esprit parût *plutôt entraîné du démon de la poésie, que guidé par la raison*. (OC 227–28, italics mine)

Boileau's *Discours sur l'ode* serves as something of a manifesto against method: in addition to praising the "rule of not obeying rules," the "mystery of art," and the "demon of poetry," Boileau elsewhere lauds the creative ecstasy of the transported poet, who, "in order to better conform with reason, abandons, so to speak, reason itself, and avoids with great care the methodical order and exact logical connections that would deprive lyrical poetry of its very soul" ("afin de mieux entrer dans la raison sort, s'il faut ainsi parler, de la raison même; évitant avec grand soin cet ordre méthodique et ces exactes liaisons de sens qui ôteraient l'âme à la poésie lyrique"; OC 227).

By the time Boileau penned this praise of a mysterious poetic "reason" that paradoxically "abandons reason itself," his was hardly a lone voice. Following the lead of his 1674 translation, others had advanced the

Longinian campaign. Longepierre in particular is adamant in defending the “beautiful faults” of the proudly neglectful Homer.²³ And he does so in language that also challenges the privileging of logical design. In Homer, Longepierre claims, we happily have “less art” and “more nature” (*Discours* 105). Or as he proceeds to phrase it:

These negligent faults must, it seems to me, render the poet even more admirable. They show us that art had almost no part in such excellent works, and that they cost very little to their divine author.

Ces négligences doivent, ce me semble, rendre ce poète encore plus admirable. Elles nous font connaître que l’art n’a presque point eu de part dans de si excellents ouvrages, et qu’ils ont peu coûté à leur divin auteur. (106)

Once again, the work seems to organically create itself, or at least to be born of a kind of instantaneous spark; the process of sublime creativity partakes of the same spontaneity that characterizes the *flat lux* as a divine act. Homer is a kind of floating spirit who breathes life into his creation. Readers, in turn, must attempt to see things from the artist’s hovering heights. Longepierre thus compares the sublime poet to a painter who wisely brushes certain corners in broad, loose strokes: this occasional “lack of care” felicitously draws our attention elsewhere, toward the most striking focal points.²⁴ The overall effect of course depends on the viewer not fussing over the hazier parts with too close an eye. One must take proper distance from such a canvas to grasp its power. Understanding the sublime is a matter of point of view. The “genius” of great creators “is made only for big things; the little ones disappear in the distance from their view. They need objects in proportion to their elevation” (“leur génie [...] n’est fait que pour les grandes choses, ces petites disparaissent à leur vue dans l’éloignement. Il leur faut des objets proportionnés à leur élévation”; 107). Longepierre imagines the artist as something of a lofty impressionist: a slavish attention to certain details would only ruin the powerful impact of the painting. Once the viewer takes the proper distance, the sublime cannot fail to strike.

The Reader’s Part

Through a creative rereading of the sublime, the Ancients upend the key tenets of the Moderns’ neoclassical poetics. Against the demands of clarity, they reassert the materiality of language, invested with an ineffable (even obscure) force emanating from its original linguistic expression and cultural context. Against the requirement of methodical order, they posit

a higher “reason” that may neglect reason itself; they discern in master-works an organic coherence—a mysterious order within *disorder*—that cannot be reduced to a mechanical economy of engineered parts. And finally, against the idealization of a logical poet-architect, they renovate the ancient figure of the inspired genius, one now historically rooted in a Homeric or Pindaric era closer to artless nature.²⁵

The appropriation of the Longinian sublime thus allows the Ancient party to crucially shift some foundational notions concerning the formal evaluation of poetry and the nature of its production. Arguably even more transformative will be the impact of the sublime on the conception, not simply of works and their authors, but of readers and the role and function of their experience. Before turning to this end of the equation, however, it will be useful to more precisely measure the degree to which the renovation of the sublime can indeed be considered a radical, or even revolutionary, act.

In certain respects, the response may appear to be not much at all. The disturbing provocation of the sublime’s emergence can be minimized by critics and scholars—and, indeed, through much of literary history it has been. Seen from this angle, the sublime serves simply as a carefully modulated and strategic counterbalance to the excesses of rationalist rigor. The ineffable and the methodic (and thus the ancient and the modern) would therefore exist in a felicitous tension that constitutes a harmonious aesthetic concert of contending, yet intertwining, interests. The delicate poise of this finely shaded “French classicism” is expressed in such paradoxical commonplaces as “passionate yet sober”; “artful yet natural.” Such equivocal formulas abound in the critical treatises of the period. Rapin’s highly influential 1674 *Réflexions sur la Poétique d’Aristote*, for example, repeatedly (and sometimes bewilderingly) juggles the demands of “method” and “design” with those of “genius” and “inspiration,” even while recognizing the inevitable opposition between the two.²⁶ The only resolution to this tension is ultimately to be found not in critical theory, where its contradictions cannot be logically reconciled, but instead in practice, in the artist’s masterful negotiation of two contending claims. For the practitioner, these competing requirements demand less an exclusionary choice than the art of finesse.

Seen from afar, such a felicitous equilibrium may explain the success of the *Grand Siècle* and its prized “classical” writers: Racine, Molière, Madame de La Fayette. Generations of appreciative critics have certainly not been mistaken in praising this subtle balance. But when we turn our attention away from individual creative works and toward the divisive philosophical and critical debates over the form and function of literature, that

delicate balance is inevitably upset. In recent decades, a second, less pacifying, view of the Ancient party's redeployment of Longinus has developed. Boileau's sublime is here presented as a radical rupture with the dictates of his age. It is out of joint with the time. The anachronistic quality of the sublime, though, can be viewed alternatively as regressive or progressive, reactionary or revolutionary. Reactionary, when seen as a return to the aesthetic values of antiquity itself or, much more recently, to the neo-Platonism of the Renaissance and its metaphysics of poetic inspiration.²⁷ Revolutionary, when seen as the first step toward the elaboration of an eighteenth-century philosophy of the sublime, from Addison to Burke and Kant.²⁸ Or, viewed even more prospectively, as a pre-Romantic élan preparing the future rejection of poetic rules.²⁹ Or even as the first seeds of twentieth-century modern and postmodern art, of its profound nonconformism and rejection of current standards of taste.³⁰

In this sense, the shock of the old—the ancient sublime that challenges convention—anticipates what Robert Hughes titled *The Shock of the New* of twentieth-century art. The Ancients may thus be labeled as more “modern” (if construed as consonant with “modernist”) than the self-proclaimed Moderns.³¹ Prudence nevertheless requires some nuance on this point: the Ancients were not, any more than the Moderns, lobbing aesthetic grenades at their audience; they in fact aimed, just like their opponents, to carry the elite, leisured public along with them. And they were largely successful. Yet the Ancients knew they were up against a strong, if not overwhelming, countercurrent. Racine may at first have dismissed Perrault's public reading of his modern manifesto, *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*, as a harmlessly playful provocation, but the impassioned responses from Longepierre and Boileau show how menacing it was felt to be.

In short, Ancient apologists had to contend with the undeniable fact that the sublime, despite its supposedly invincible force, simply did not “ravish, strike, carry away” everyone. “When the sublime has burst forth where it should, it overwhelms everything like lightning.” Why, then, did it not overwhelm the Modern partisans? To explain the anomaly, the Ancients were compelled to conduct their own character analysis of the Moderns (just as we have seen the Moderns conduct theirs of the Ancients) in order to identify the impairments that render certain readers insensible to the ineffable. The point is capital. By turning their attention to the psychological barriers that impede the Moderns' appreciation, the Ancients initiate a profound reflection on the experience of reading or beholding the sublime.

This reflection constitutes, as I have suggested, the sharpest forward

thrust of the Ancient movement. They turn their attention away from the technical production of the text and its formal qualities (classical poetics) toward a key interest of the incipient philosophy of aesthetics: the subjective experience of the reader or viewer.³² We have seen that the Moderns' analysis of the Ancients' nonrational nature constituted a seminal critical assessment of the impediments that could cripple the advance of scientific philology; the Moderns did so by isolating certain affective elements that bias the reader's response (the time and place of consumption, the nostalgia of the reader, etc.). The Ancients likewise explore certain nonrational elements that condition, and may even determine, the literary experience. They do so, however, with an eye not to their faults but to their unexpected benefits.

Chief among the nonintellectual aspects of reading that interest the Ancients is the use of the senses. The subtlety and receptivity of their operations, and their effective communication with the imagination and the heart, constitute what is approvingly called "taste." And that, according to the Ancients, is precisely the faculty that the Moderns lack. As Fénelon later remarked on the Moderns' criticism of Homer's admitted faults: "Some of the neglected patches by great painters are much grander than the most polished works of mediocre painters. The mediocre critic does not *taste* the sublime, he is not struck by it" ("En effet certains traits négligés des grands peintres sont fort au-dessus des ouvrages les plus léchés des peintres médiocres. Le censeur médiocre ne goûte point le sublime, il n'en est point saisi" (*Œuvres* 2:1192). Fénelon's remark summarizes the key elements that Boileau draws from Longinus: the dismissal of mediocre method, the praise of a certain disordered "neglect," and, finally, the impenetrable operations of the sublime's effect on the reader. Fénelon likewise follows Boileau in considering the success of this effect as entirely dependent on the sensitivity of reader's taste. We have already seen the paradigm at play in Boileau's mockery of Perrault's inability to understand the "*mystery of art*, which is not easily understood by a man *without any taste*." The sublime is first materially seen, felt, or tasted; only after this initial sensorial absorption can it be (partially and indefinitely) understood. As he later admonishes Perrault: "if you do not see the beauty of their writings, you should conclude not that it is inexistent, but that you are blind and have no taste" ("si vous ne voyez point les beautés de leurs écrits, il ne faut pas conclure qu'elles n'y sont point, mais que vous êtes aveugle, et que vous n'avez point de goût"; *Réflexion VII*, in *OC* 524).

Boileau develops the metaphor of aesthetic blindness in one of the more vivid passages of the *Reflexions*:

Monsieur P[errault . . .] say[s] to the human race, which for so many centuries has admired the work of this great poet [Homer], “You have admired idiocies!” It is almost as if a man born blind were to run through the streets shouting: “Messieurs, I know that the sun that you see appears to you very beautiful; but I, who have never seen it, I declare to you that it is very ugly.”

Monsieur P[. . .] di[t] au genre humain qui a admiré les ouvrages de ce grand poète durant tant de siècles, Vous avez admiré des sottises. C’est à peu près la même chose qu’un aveugle-né qui s’en irait crier par toutes les rues: Messieurs, je sais que le soleil que vous voyez vous paraît fort beau; mais moi qui ne l’ai jamais vu, je vous déclare qu’il est fort laid. (525)

Perrault might argue that his alleged blindness (including his inability to read the Greek original) only makes him a more impartial judge, one who will objectively evaluate the case based purely on the most rigorous and abstract reasoning, uncolored by the seductions of material form. But the sublime, as Boileau insisted, “is not a thing that can be proved or demonstrated.” Boileau would surely agree that a rational demonstration could prove to a blind and insensate man that there exists an astronomical body called the sun, and that the planets revolve around it. But as for its “beauty,” that “is instead a wonder that seizes, strikes, makes itself felt” (546).

Boileau’s reference to the sun is not without special resonance here, for its fiery ardor, along with lightning and volcanoes, is one of the special emblems of the sublime. But it may be Longepierre, rather than Boileau, who most daringly deploys this emblem in order to illustrate the irreducible personal experience of the reader. I have already suggested Longepierre’s crucial role in elucidating a vision of literature that privileges the emotive response of the audience.³³ This response cannot be explained away by logical demonstration: “Is it possible to assert that I do not feel what I feel? [. . .] When one is touched by *reading the ancients*, the thing is *very real*” (*Discours* 36, 38). He later compares that sublime “reality” to the “divine fire” (“feu céleste”) of the sun, whose rays we absorb without either conscious intention or reasoning attention:

We can perhaps imperceptibly absorb some of the rare qualities [of ancient masterpieces], without thinking too much about doing it, or without perceiving how it happens; it is a somewhat like walking in the sun and unintentionally tanning ourselves.

Peut-être pourrons-nous prendre insensiblement une partie de leurs rares qualités, sans que nous pensions trop à le faire, ou sans que nous nous

apercevions comment cela se sera fait, à peu près comme lorsque nous nous promenons au soleil, nous nous hâtons sans en avoir le dessein. (*Discours* 170)

Although he attributes the comparison to Cicero, Longepierre's parallel has a provocative power we might easily miss today. A good two centuries before the idea of tanning took on a positive connotation, the scorching effect of the sun is hardly the pursuit of the French cultured elite; it is instead associated with the crude simplicity of European peasants—or the New World Iroquois mocked by Perrault. Once again, Longepierre's sublime ancients are closer to nature than to art.

Longepierre's argument, however, advances well beyond such anecdotal illustrations. His *Discours sur les anciens* represents a bold attempt to reorient the discussion on literature and art to the realm of lived experience, to the organic relation between the sublime artwork and its audience. With this aim in mind, Longepierre distinguishes between the knowledge secured by the natural sciences, subject to proofs and demonstrations, and the pleasure afforded by literature and the fine arts, which cannot properly be subjected to such analyses. With Harvey, Longepierre grants, modern science has proved the circulation of blood; "age-old error and prejudice" have thus been demolished (29). Longepierre is delighted at this progress. But in the arts, it is impossible to prove by reason alone that ancient literature is not beautiful and moving. The Moderns want to establish new rules for literature, the kind of exacting principles of rational economy and propriety that we have seen. Very well, Longepierre replies. To do so, however, "it is necessary to prove these [principles] to us and thoroughly prove them, which one is very far from being able to do" ("Il faut nous les prouver et nous les bien prouver; ce qu'on est bien éloigné de pouvoir faire"; 30–31). The Moderns cannot deliver such proof, Longepierre contends, because there is simply no way to demonstrate, by studying the artwork itself, that it has failed in its chief mission: to move the reader or viewer. Art falls out of "the jurisdiction" of such analyses (30). The secret of the sublime, we have seen, cannot be discerned in the object itself (unlike, say, the circulation of blood). A poem's success is thus to be measured only by its effects, and such effects are in fact phenomena that "can be designated only imperfectly"; many, indeed, are "strongly felt but cannot be expressed."³⁴ They are entirely immune to logical "syllogisms" (40). Abstract and a priori reasoning collapses at the heart's door: "How may the movements of the heart be shown to be false, the heart which knows things only by feeling, and which can feel in itself only what is really there?" ("Comment les mouvements du cœur seraient-ils susceptibles de faux, lui qui ne connaît

les choses que par le sentiment et qui n'y peut sentir que ce qui y est?"; 35–36). Where the Moderns privileged the head, Longepierre privileges the heart. The move provides sure shelter for the ancients. Like love, poetry is a matter of sensibility: How can you "prove that beauty is to be loved, and that pleasure is moving, to people so insensate as not to feel it?" ("prouver que la beauté est aimable, et que le plaisir est touchant à des gens assez insensibles pour ne le pas sentir?"; 41).

Longepierre's relational and emotivist approach to the aesthetic experience inevitably begs a vexing question: does it not ultimately undermine any stable foundation for universal standards of judgment? Once a rational analysis of the artwork itself is no longer the privileged means for determining its power to move its audience, once the sublime is primarily invested in the dynamic interaction between the source and the recipient, is one not forced to abandon any objective evaluation?³⁵ The question of the relativity of taste would nourish intense reflection in the coming century. More than a half-century before Hume's *Of the Standard of Taste*, Longepierre adumbrates an empiricist solution to the problem, one that helps prepare the ground for that great reader of the quarrel's import (as well as for intermediary figures such as Du Bos and Hutcheson). Since we can locate the true efficacy of art only in the response it engenders, Longepierre argues that we must seek the widest possible empirical evidence concerning those responses. "Let one thus consult history and judge the merit of the ancients by its reports of the astonishing effects of their works" ("Qu'on consulte donc l'histoire, et qu'on juge du mérite des anciens par les effets surprenants qu'elle nous raconte de leurs ouvrages"; 176). A simple review of the data quickly demonstrates that Homer and other great ancients have received consistent praise from the best and most respected readers through the ages. The facts speak for themselves, presenting nothing less than a "guarantee" of the ancients' surefire effect, which has garnered the "universal consent of every century" ("consentement universel de tous les siècles"; 176, 44–45).³⁶

The evidence may not, however, be as overwhelming as it appears. Longepierre understands that he must answer two potential weaknesses that might seriously undercut its validity. The first is that the "consent" in question may be forced and not freely given; the conditions in which readers and critics over the centuries registered their approval may have been fatally biased. According to this perspective, the admirers of Homer did not report their actual feelings; their craven praise was nothing but a genuflection before the authority of a long tradition that they dared not challenge. Or, even more perversely, they submitted to that authority with such passionate devotion that they mistook their prejudices for authentic

and unbiased feelings; in other words, they suffered from a kind of aesthetic bad faith which led them to believe themselves enraptured by ancient texts whose imperfections could never have pleased an impartial mind. Such, we have seen, is in fact the Modern position regarding bias in favor of antiquity.

Longepierre's response? It is first of all implausible to believe that so many great thinkers have cowered like children in the face of paltry literary tradition.³⁷ And as for the claim that prejudices bred by literary authority could actually produce an artificial or "false" sensation of pleasure in the reader, we have seen Longepierre's incredulity: "Is it possible to assert that I do not feel what I feel? That I weep by bias and tremble by prejudice [in favor of ancients]?" In short, false reasoning may fool the mind, but not the imagination or affections, where it is powerless. "The mind is the source and seat of prejudices; but . . . they are not made for the heart" ("l'esprit est la source et le siège des préjugés ; mais [...] ils ne sont pas faits pour le cœur"; 37).

If Longepierre believes he has sufficiently demonstrated the validity of the positive responses over time to the great classics, he has yet to face a second problem: this approbation or "consent," even if freely given, is not so "universal" as he claims. We have already noted the Moderns' merciless trumpeting of the many harsh critics, since early antiquity itself, of ancient poets such as Homer. And these critics have only become more numerous since the rise of the critical new philosophy. Longepierre may believe that these rare dissenting voices are the exceptions that prove the rule; nevertheless, having based his argument on the empirical evidence of readers' responses, he must explain—and somehow void—the negative reaction of a (growing) minority. He does so by limiting valid judgments exclusively to those determined to be from fair and sensitive observers. To be admissible, the response to ancient literature must come from a reader who, first, has the innate capacity to respond to the artwork and, second, is sufficiently unbiased to respond in a way that reflects a genuine experience of the work and not the *a priori* beliefs brought to the literary encounter. Of course, Homer's critics, according to the Ancients, generally fail both requirements. As for innate capacities, they have none: they are, we have seen, "blind," "insensate," and "without taste." Longepierre can "only feel pity" for their aesthetic disabilities (39). And as for impartiality, the Moderns are even further lacking. Longepierre follows here the Ancient party strategy of turning the accusation of prejudice against its opponents: blinded by an exclusive and narcissistic love of the present day, the Moderns are numb to the pleasures afforded by the works of a faraway past.³⁸

Longepierre must, however, distinguish here between two types of

prejudice. He has, we recall, claimed that the alleged prejudice *in favor* of the ancients *cannot* in and of itself produce an inauthentic or “false” emotional response in the heart of the reader. That is beyond prejudice’s purely intellectual power (29). But prejudice *against* the ancients *can* effectively block whatever receptivity a reader may have to the aesthetic qualities of ancient works.³⁹ How are we to understand this distinction? Prejudice for Longepierre merely controls the valve, so to speak, of impressions; it does not create them, but only opens and closes the senses and heart to them. The errors of prejudice never generate sensations of pleasure, though they can impede them. Bias can thus, claims Longepierre, skew the empirical evidence in one direction alone: unfairly against the ancients.

Once thus modified to exclude unfit judges (who, not surprisingly, are all detractors of the ancients), the age-old consensus in favor of the classics can indeed be deemed “universal” by Longepierre. His arguments prove, in the final analysis, invaluable. The turn toward the individual reader’s relation to literature affords the Ancients both a strategic and a tactical advantage: tactical as an empirical means of demonstrating the power of ancient poetry; strategic as a key tool for defeating the broader Modern project of a rationalist poetics that would subjugate sensual and emotional responses to an abstract and methodical analysis of the work that generates them.

Given this double utility, it is no surprise that Boileau echoes Longepierre’s empirical argument in his seventh *Réflexion*. And, once again, he starkly differentiates between, on one side, the cognitive prejudices restricting the intellect and, on the other, the autonomous emotional experience of the reader—the latter being the only true evidence of a work’s sublimity. It is not, he stresses, the “length of time that works have *survived*” that proves their greatness; this, Boileau concedes, would constitute nothing but an arbitrary prejudice in favor of mere longevity. It is instead only “the length of time that they have *been admired*” that proves their power on the human imagination (527). Once again, Boileau reframes the quarrel: the debate does not concern the antiquity of a work, but instead the antiquity of the sublime effects it has engendered.⁴⁰

Sublime Naturalism and Pathos

By shifting the debate to poetry’s effect on readers, the Ancients must also contend with its sometimes disturbing moral impact. Ravished by the sublime, readers not only temporarily abandon the cognitive norms of methodical reason, but also at times the moral conventions of their nation and age. The sublime thus proves an audacious, if risky, arm against the

strict requirements of decorum and propriety so effectively deployed by the Moderns. Privileging emotional experience, the Ancients reactivate the countermodel of tragic pathos, as an end in itself, against the Moderns' preference for moral clarity, exemplary characters, and edifying denouements. In place of the sanitized aesthetic of "la belle nature," Ancient apologists vaunt a fidelity to the flawed reality of unvarnished "nature" itself; in place of "perfect heroes," complicated and flawed humans; and in place of didactic lessons, emotionally charged narratives.

From the early rumblings of the quarrel, we have seen that Ancient partisans largely downplayed the instrumentality of poetry for nonliterary social or political ends. In his prefaces, Racine judged his own works above all for their ability to "move" the reader, to draw tears, to engender "majestic sadness." Having cut his literary teeth on a violent polemic against the antitheatrical moralizing of his former Jansenist mentors, he had no intention of bowing to their rigorist conception of literature's duty to public moral hygiene.⁴¹ It is not, of course, that Racine intended to take a sledgehammer to the delicate balance of moral utility and poetic pleasure in which all contemporary writers operated. He simply stresses the primacy of pleasure, while most often benignly neglecting utility.⁴² As does Boileau. His *Art poétique* may wish to maintain the peaceful harmony of the *utile dulci*, but it is the pleasurable (if passionate) effect of poetry, and not its moral or political efficacy, to which he devotes the greatest part of his attention. Among the noble genres, tragedy is valued for its pathos, epic for its enthralling action and lively narration, comedy for its lifelike depictions of daily life and for laughter. It is true that in his conclusion Boileau makes a final appeal for poets to avoid corrupting their audiences by perversely rendering "vice lovable" (*OC* 182). However, he quickly nuances the statement with an acerbic denunciation of those "sad spirits" who would police literature, and censor tragic realism in the name of moral exemplarity. Boileau indignantly counters such moralizing critics by asserting that Corneille is no "poisoner" of audiences, as they charged, simply for vividly depicting in *Le Cid* the shocking love of Chimène for the man who killed her father (182). Boileau here distinguishes a work's emotional impact from its moral influence: with Virgil's Dido, for example, the reader may "condemn her fault while partaking in her tears" ("condamne sa faute, en partageant ses larmes"). In short, poetry "does not corrupt the heart by tickling the senses" ("ne corrompt point le cœur, en chatouillant les sens"; 182). If the frank (though not, Boileau scrupulously explicates, lascivious) depiction of lifelike moral imperfections somehow serves to corrupt, the fault often lies with the susceptible viewer, and not with the work of art, which can hardly be held responsible for all human frailty.⁴³

This assertive, if tightly circumscribed, declaration of the independence of creative literature from the empire of moral philosophy is frequently rehearsed by Ancient partisans, and finds perhaps its most adamant expression in Anne Dacier's 1711 preface to the *Iliad*. I earlier referred to her appeal against Plato's critique of Homer; having now examined the Moderns' utilitarian view of poetry, we can appreciate the provocation of the full passage:

In general, Plato examines Homer's poetry in relation to political philosophy, and he condemns poetry when he finds that it does not conform to the rules that a good statesman sets for the preservation of the state and for the happiness of the people. There is nothing more unjust; and it is against this injustice that Aristotle wrote (*Poetics* ch. 26 [Dacier's note]): "It must be remembered that one must not judge the excellence of poetry as one does that of politics, nor that of any of the other arts." The aim of poetry is to imitate, and its imitation can be [as] vicious in regard to good politics, as it is excellent in regard to good poetry.

En général Platon examine la poésie d'Homère par rapport à la politique, et il la condamne quand il ne la trouve pas conforme aux règles qu'un bon politique donne pour la conservation des états et pour le bonheur des peuples. Il n'y a rien de plus injuste, et c'est pour s'opposer à cette injustice qu'Aristote a écrit (*Poétique* ch. 26): *Il faut bien se souvenir qu'on ne doit pas juger de l'excellence de la poésie comme de celle de la politique, ni même comme de celle de tous les autres arts*. Le but de la poésie est d'imiter, et son imitation pourrait être [aussi] vicieuse en bonne politique, qu'elle serait excellente en bonne poésie. (*L'Iliade* xxii–xxiii)

The Moderns are again cast here as the party of the *Republic*, the Ancients as the party of the *Poetics*. Or rather of a certain reading of the *Poetics*, since each of the parties in fact adopted its own version of Aristotle's treatise. We have seen, for example, that the Moderns enthusiastically employed Aristotle's ideal of poetic unity against the perceived disorder of ancient works. The Moderns also appropriated to their own particular ends the same principle of mimesis that Dacier embraces in the above passage. In their preference for an ameliorated *belle nature*, Modern partisans draw on Aristotle's paradigm of poetry's careful filtering of material and, in particular, on the famous ninth chapter, in which he opposes the unmitigated fidelity to fact that characterizes the writing of history, on the one hand, to poetry's more selective (and philosophical) practice of representing the essence of things, on the other. When Aristotle affirms that the poet represents what "may" or "should" happen, rather than simply "what has

happened,” the Moderns take it to mean that moral norms should guide the poet’s scrupulous transformation of (in Perrault’s terms) “raw nature.” For the Moderns, Aristotelian mimesis is a call for edifying idealization. When we turn to Ancient partisans, we find that they are equally indebted to Aristotle’s distinction between history and poetry, but differ radically from their opponents in their interpretation. The defenders of Homer understand Aristotle to be urging the poet to craft a representation of life that renders, not a mere chronology of contingent events, but the essential moral and psychological nature of human reality. That may mean avoiding some lowly and mechanical details, but it does not mean avoiding core human vices, no matter how shocking: it means depicting moral ugliness as well as moral beauty. For the Ancients, Aristotelian mimesis is a call for unvarnished (if artfully condensed and sublimely distilled) truth-telling.

We earlier saw this embrace of unflattering realism in Racine’s insistence on portraying disturbing human faults, on depicting Achilles as “wild, inexorable, violent, just as he was” in life (“farouche, inexorable, violent, *tel qu’il était*”; preface to *Andromaque*, in *OC I*). Despite the hyperbolic readings of a few later critics, the “realism” in question is far from that of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ Racine carefully follows the dictates of his time and the definition of his noble genre by maintaining a lofty distance from concrete quotidian concerns. Nevertheless, he forcefully rejects the draconian claims of propriety designed to enforce a homogenized moral perfection. Throughout his career he fought the critics who found the moral naturalism of his plays too shocking to bear. He also had to outmaneuver his playwright peers who wrote sanitized versions of his Greek sources in the form of tidier tragedies. While the Agamemnon of his *Iphigénie* must, in the torment of ethical dilemma, seriously consider the human sacrifice of his daughter, his competitors, in contrast, fashioned an edifying monarch who, fortified by spotless paternal virtue, resists such moral ambiguity; and while the heroine of Racine’s *Phèdre* sinks into an abyss of abhorrent desire, his rival produced a less faulty Phaedra who, not yet married to the father of her desired Hippolytus, is happily free from the charge of incest.⁴⁵ To Modern eyes, depicting without such rectification these “unnatural” passions could only be seen, to reprise La Motte, as portraying not men but “monsters.”⁴⁶

The monstrous is, however, for the Ancients precisely what the tragic poet must paint. Boileau thus opens his remarks on the lofty genres in the *Art poétique* by echoing Aristotle’s most disturbing illustrations of mimesis: “the odious serpent or monster” that, well imitated, somehow pleases; the incestuous and “blood-soaked Oedipus” and “the parricidal Orestes.” Those are the “frightful objects” that enable tragedy to realize its primary

goal: not to inculcate moral dictates, but to “extract our tears.”⁴⁷ Longepierre likewise vaunts the frank naturalism of the ancients. “Poetry is an art of painting directly from life, its principal beauty consists in achieving likeness” (“la poésie est un art de peindre d’après la nature, sa principale beauté consiste à attraper la ressemblance”; *Théocrite* 2). Only the Greeks fully mastered this art. The later Romans, followed by the Italians and French, may be more elegant, but Longepierre prefers the earliest ancients, even if the objects they depict include “some that are savage and a bit crude” (“quelques-uns de sauvage et d’un peu brut”), and even some that admittedly are “obscenities” (37, 13). As for the notion of “la belle nature,” the Ancients consistently mock its idealized distortions of human nature. As Anne Dacier phrased it, “Nothing would be more ridiculous than to render [a portrait] more beautiful by destroying its resemblance to the model” (“Rien ne serait plus ridicule que de [le] rendre plus beau en détruisant la ressemblance”; *L’Iliade* xxv–xxvi).⁴⁸ Truth is beauty enough. To embellish it is to abandon it.⁴⁹

It is upon this more liberal vision of mimesis that the Ancients construct an aesthetics that privileges the emotional impact of the work above its didactic message. Pathos is their aim. And it constitutes an end in and of itself. Boileau, Racine, and their followers thus pay little more than lip service (and that very rarely) to theories of catharsis intended to place tragic passions at the service of the public good.⁵⁰ They furthermore have no taste for the happy and morally “satisfying” endings vaunted by the Moderns. Nor for the poetics of exemplarity. To those who would correct the hero’s vices, Boileau warns: “Achilles would displease if less irate and volatile” (“Achille déplaierait moins bouillant et moins prompt”; *OC* 171). Tragic pleasure trumps moral perfection. Faced with the even more intransigent didacticism of the second generation of Moderns, Boivin sums up thus in 1715 the Ancient position, taking aim at Terrasson’s vision of poetic exemplarity. The epic is not a lesson book:

The *Iliad* is a tragedy of grand proportions [...]. Just as it would be ridiculous to banish from tragedy pride, anger, and vengeance, so is it just as ridiculous to find intolerable these same passions in the principal heroes of an epic poem. [...] Explosive, violent, stubborn, inexorable, Achilles is not proposed as a good model.

L’Iliade est une grande tragédie [...]. Comme il serait ridicule de vouloir bannir de la tragédie l’orgueil, la colère, et la vengeance, il est ridicule aussi de ne pouvoir souffrir ces mêmes mouvements dans les principaux

héros d'un poème épique. [...] Achille emporté, violent, opiniâtre, inexorable, n'est pas proposé comme un bon modèle. (*Apologie* 20–21).⁵¹

Finally, in championing such tragic naturalism, the Ancients crucially revise one last aspect of the prevailing notion of mimesis. Having stressed poetry's capacity to convey the unflattering truth of human nature, they fundamentally undermine any unitary conception of that nature by exposing its distinct variability through time. So it is that Boileau urges the poet to study the "diverse humors" of varying ages and countries.⁵² Without directly contesting the underlying commonality of certain passions, the Ancients insist on privileging their profoundly different and divergent manifestations through time. We have seen that this view can undermine the stable foundations of decorum and propriety, which admirers of Homer like Longepierre directly challenge.⁵³ But ultimately, rather than rejecting wholesale the principle of decorum, the Ancients adapt and transform it to advance their defense of the ancients. Aristotelian or Horatian decorum was based in part on the proper conformity of literary characters to the generic characteristics of their age in life, their gender, and their rank: a king should act proudly, a young man impetuously, a mature man prudently, and so on. Ancient partisans supplement this schema of characterological variability by factoring in cultural differences through time. Boivin sums up thus a historicized notion of decorum:

Homer's heroes truly have faults. [...] He painted the morals and manners of his time: he characterized men by their virtues as well as by their vices. There are vices attached to each social station and rank as well as to each age in a human lifespan. There are also vices attached to differing nations and time periods of history.

Les héros d'Homère ont véritablement des défauts. [...] Il a peint les mœurs de son siècle: il a caractérisé les hommes par leurs vices comme par leurs vertus. Il y a des vices attachés à certaines conditions aussi bien qu'à certains âges. Il y a aussi des vices de nation et des vices de siècle. (*Apologie* 47)

The temporal diversity of ethical landscapes has a profound impact on literary characterizations: Boivin, for example, does not hesitate to define the driving motivations of the Homeric hero as fundamentally contrary to those of a Christian universe.⁵⁴ Such distinctions based on historical difference furthermore constitute for Boivin much more than mere poetic adornments in the form of occasional bursts of local color. Indeed, the

faithful rendering of culturally conditioned *mores* is raised to one of the defining principles of poetics. Thus Boivin begins his catalogue of criteria for evaluating poetry as follows:

A poem would everywhere be considered excellent if the versification was exact and harmonious, if it was full of natural images that are vividly painted, if it made us familiar with the manners, morals, and defining features of an unknown nation.

Le poème serait excellent en tout pays, si la versification était exacte et harmonieuse, s'il était plein d'images naturelles parfaitement bien peintes, s'il faisait connaître les mœurs et le génie d'une nation inconnue. (33)

The Ancients begin to elucidate here nothing less than a literary paradigm of historical realism. Of course, the historical realism in question is of a very particular brand. Most importantly, it can still conform to Aristotle's canonical distinction between poetry and history. It is historical without being history. Boivin, Longepierre, and Dacier do not, we have seen, call for an exact rendering of the chronology of events or, as will later develop, a rigorous scientific study of the sociological and political conditions of the time period represented. Rather, in perfect accord with Aristotle's distinction, they wish for poetry to capture the essential differences in values and customs that not only define a culture, but, more crucially to the literary project, shape moral motivations and mold passions.

This proviso, however sharply it may delimit historical detail, cannot be said to diminish the broader historicizing implications of the Ancients' notion of mimesis. Indeed, if we return to a remark by Boivin quoted in chapter 9, we can now grasp the full power of its stark differentiation between timeless ideals of morality, which are the business of philosophy, and the actual moral conventions and practices of the poet's time (or of the time the poet depicts). Fidelity to the latter, and to the latter alone, is the business of poetry: "It is not a matter of determining whether the manners and morals that Homer depicts are good or bad, but simply of determining whether in his time, or in the time of the Trojan war, the manners and morals were as he depicted them" (64).

It is perhaps Fénelon, moderate though he was in his defense of antiquity, who best gauged the full implications of this turn toward a historically nuanced mimesis. When he compares Homer's brand of naturalism to the art of painting, he goes so far as to liken the ancient epic, not, as one would expect, to the lofty and decorous genre of "history painting," but to the less august genre then most often associated with unadorned realism: portraiture.

He had to represent men in accordance with the morals and manners that then reigned in Greece and in Asia Minor. To blame Homer for faithfully painting directly from life would be like reproaching M. Mignard, M. de Troy, M. Rigaut, for having made portraits that resemble their models.

Il devait représenter les hommes, selon les mœurs, qui régnaient alors dans la Grèce, et dans l'Asie Mineure. Blâmer Homère d'avoir peint fidèlement d'après nature, c'est reprocher à M. Mignard, à M. de Troy, à M. Rigaut d'avoir fait des portraits ressemblants. (*Œuvres* 2:1192–93)

Fénelon, just like Boivin and Dacier, understands of course that not everyone wished to see such lifelike portraits of cruder times.⁵⁵ Echoing these Ancient partisans, he attributes this resistance to a debilitating Modern brand of vanity. Rendered insensate by self-satisfaction, these readers miss the extraordinary impact delivered by a remote age. Yet Fénelon asserts that we can, to a high degree, attribute Homer's greatness to the very brutality and irrationality of his time. This is the ultimate paradox of antiquity: "the crude deformity of the ancient religion" and even the sore "lack of a true moral philosophy" prove, when conveyed in Homer's powerful poetry, to constitute "a great honor for antiquity."⁵⁶ But to recognize, or rather to experience, this power demands from the reader an arduous leap of imagination:

The more the religion was monstrous and ridiculous, the more one must admire [Homer] for having raised it up with so many magnificent images. The cruder the morals and manners were, the more stirring it is to see that he lent such power to what is so irregular, so absurd, so shocking.

Plus la religion était monstrueuse et ridicule, plus il faut l'admirer de l'avoir relevée par tant de magnifiques images. Plus les mœurs étaient grossières, plus il faut être touché de voir qu'il ait donné tant de force à ce qui est en soi si irrégulier, si absurde, et si choquant. (2:1193)

Fénelon's qualified taste for what is "so irregular, so absurd, so shocking" in antiquity is grounded in a very different perspective from that often adopted by Anne Dacier. To return to the epigraph that opens this book, when Dacier found "those ancient times all the more beautiful in that they so little resemble our own," she expressed a brimming enthusiasm for all the wonderful otherness of the ancient world: its simpler manners, its lack of luxury, its proximity to divine revelation. Her passionate engagement sometimes went well beyond literary matters. Fénelon himself shared at times some of that broader admiration, but as the above lines suggest, he

was also a man fully invested in the contemporary world. He had thoughtfully digested the Modern critique. Ancient manners, Fénelon admits, were not always nobly austere. Sometimes they were just “crude.” Pagan myths did not always secretly envelop monotheistic truths; sometimes they were simply “monstrous and ridiculous.” Fénelon speaks here as a reader of poetry, and not as a committed Hellenophile or even as a pluralist advocating tolerance for a faraway past. His rejection of the errors of antiquity results from what he confidently judges to be an objective and enlightened evaluation. But he places that evaluation in a broader perspective, and sharply delimits its domain.

Faced with his own conflicting reactions to the poem, Fénelon urges the reader to develop a kind of double consciousness: a philosophical and moral one that disapproves, and an aesthetic one that takes delight.⁵⁷ It is Fénelon’s distinction of these two domains—made elsewhere by Boileau, Racine, Longepierre, Boivin, and even the wavering Anne Dacier—that will encounter enormous success in the coming decades. Yet, that distinction will always be a fragile one. For Fénelon’s praise of Homer requires not that the two levels of consciousness remain safely isolated from each other, but instead that they dynamically interact. It is, after all, the poet’s powerful rendering of the “monstrous” and “absurd” qualities of his world that produces the transporting images and heightened pathos of the epic. That is the great secret of the “shock” of the ancient: to place moral and philosophical discomfort at the service of the sublime.

CONCLUSION * After the Quarrel

When in 1733 Voltaire, who five years earlier had returned to France from his English sojourn, turns to Homer in his essay on epic poetry, he confesses that he needed some help to overcome his initial (and quite Modern) resistance to Homer's "crude faults." He finds that help through a parallel between Homer and Shakespeare:

At last I found among the English what I was looking for, and the paradox of Homer's reputation was made clear to me. Shakespeare, their first tragic poet, is hardly given in England any other epithet but that of divine. [...] When I began to learn English, I could not understand how a nation so enlightened could admire an author so extravagant: but as soon as I had a better grasp of their language, I perceived that the English were right. [...] They saw, as I did, the crude faults of their favorite author but they sensed better than I did his beauties, all the more singular in that they were flashes of lightning in a deep and dark night. [...] Such is the privilege of the genius of invention; it clears a path where no one has walked before; it rushes forward without guidance, without art, without rules. It sometimes loses its way, but it leaves far behind itself everything produced by mere reason and exactitude. Such, more or less, was Homer: he created his art, and he left it imperfect: it is still in a state of chaos; but its light shines forth from every side.

Enfin j'ai trouvé chez les Anglais ce que je cherchais; et le paradoxe de la réputation d'Homère m'a été développé. Shakespeare, leur premier poète tragique, n'a guère en Angleterre d'autre épithète que celle de divin. [...]

Quand je commençais à apprendre la langue anglaise, je ne pouvais comprendre, comment une nation si éclairée pouvait admirer un auteur si extravagant: mais dès que j'eus une grande connaissance de la langue, je m'aperçus que les Anglais avaient raison. [...] Ils voyaient comme moi les fautes grossières de leur auteur favori; mais ils sentaient mieux que moi ses beautés, d'autant plus singulières, que ce sont des éclairs qui ont brillé dans la nuit la plus profonde. [...] Tel est le privilège du génie d'invention; il se fait une route où personne n'a marché avant lui; il court sans guide, sans art, sans règle; il s'égare dans sa carrière; mais il laisse loin derrière lui tout ce qui n'est que raison et qu'exactitude. Tel à peu près était Homère: il a créé son art, et l'a laissé imparfait: c'est un chaos encore; mais la lumière y brille déjà de tous côtés. (*English Essays* 418–19)

Voltaire admirably sums up here the guiding principles developed decades earlier by the French defenders of the ancients: the necessity of reading the original work with sensitivity to the materiality of its native language;¹ the preference for the imperfect “genius of invention” over the mechanical operations of “mere reason and exactitude”; the celebration of sublime inspiration operating “without art, without rules”; and, finally, the emblematic image of poetry not as philosophical enlightenment but as Longinian sunbursts and “flashes of lightning.”

Yet when Voltaire expresses his debt to the people who helped him grasp these grounding principles, he cites not his compatriots Boileau or Boivin, but the English bard himself and his British admirers. Why? First let it be said that the comparison of Shakespeare to Homer is in itself a tribute to an aesthetic configuration that the French quarrel helped shape. Just as Virgil, the most advanced and refined of the ancients, was transformed into a “modern” in relation to Homer, so, by the same token, can Shakespeare, the most primordially fertile of modern poets, be considered an honorary “ancient.” At play here is one of the key conceptual consequences of the quarrel: an abstractly comparative historicization of aesthetic paradigms that transcends the mere facts of chronology. In terms of literary and cultural evolution, the “deep and dark night” (as Voltaire phrased it) of the now remote Elizabethan age appears to have much more in common with Homeric times than with a later, enlightened “Augustan” England. On the relative scale of poetic values, it only follows that Shakespeare play Homer to the following ages’ more refined Virgils.²

However, there is more afoot here than this broad conceptual shift. Voltaire is also absorbing what he (among many others) perceives as the very specific contributions of the British political, intellectual and cultural scene. As is recounted in his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (*Lettres*

philosophiques), Voltaire found across the Channel three crucial, and inter-related, countermodels to modern French practices (and to Modern party ideals): against the French absolutist system based on monolithic order, an ideal of English political liberty and religious tolerance; against the still predominant Cartesian hyperrationalism of France, the empiricism of Newton and Locke with its emphasis on observation and experience; and against French literary “decorum,” and “regularity,” English “genius” and “impetuosity”—and, yes, even its “shining monsters” (90–92, 102).

In short, the tolerant, empirical, and sublimely inspired English appear to advance all the causes of the Ancient movement. As for the case of Homer, Voltaire in particular draws upon an image of the epic poet deeply etched in the public mind by Alexander Pope’s monumental 1715 translation of the *Iliad*. A return to Pope’s provocative description of Homer’s “wild Paradise” will show how the English poet advanced, and at times transformed, the arguments first proposed by the French Ancients:

Homer is universally allow’d to have the greatest Invention of any Writer whatever. The praise of Judgment Virgil has justly contested with him, and others may have their Pretensions as to particular Excellencies; but his Invention remains yet unrival’d. Nor is it any Wonder if he has ever been acknowledg’d the greatest of Poets, who most excell’d in That which is the very Foundation of Poetry. [...] Whatever Praises may be given to Works of Judgment, there is not even a single Beauty in them to which the Invention must not contribute. As in the most regular Gardens, Art can only reduce the beauties of Nature to more regularity, and such a Figure, which the common Eye may better take in, and is therefore more entertain’d with. And perhaps the reason why common Criticks are inclined to prefer a judicious and methodical Genius to a great and fruitful one, is because they find it easier for themselves to pursue their Observations through an uniform and bounded Walk of Art, than to comprehend the vast and various Extent of Nature. Our Author’s Work is a wild Paradise, where if we cannot see all the Beauties so distinctly as in an order’d Garden, it is only because the Number of them is infinitely greater. ’Tis like a copious Nursery which contains the Seeds and first Productions of every kind. [...] Exact Disposition, just Thought, correct Elocution, polish’d Numbers, may have been found in a thousand; but this poetical Fire, this *Vivida vis animi*, in a very few. (*Poems* 7:3–4)

In praising “nature” above “art,” “invention,” above “judgment,” and “poetical fire” above “exact disposition” (and thus Homer above Virgil), Pope was indebted not only to the renovation of the Longinian sublime realized by Boileau and his followers, but also to a personal (and increas-

ingly national) preoccupation with the emerging landscape movement of English gardening. Indeed, Pope had published his first translated morsel of Homer in a 1713 essay in which he decried the “modern” artifice of formalized gardens and, in happy contrast, enthusiastically lauded the “taste of the ancients” for the “simplicity of unadorned nature.”³ As an illustration of the latter, Pope cited the *Iliad*’s description of the gardens of Alcinous, which he rendered in English verse.⁴

Pope, of course, knew that he was getting into one of the battles of the *querelle* (witnessed by the ink spilled by Perrault and Longepierre over the gardens of Versailles and of Alcinous), but his interest in the Homeric parallels to “unadorned” landscapes had a more immediate forerunner in another key figure (both for himself and for Voltaire): Joseph Addison. In a crucial passage of his 1712 “Pleasures of the Imagination,” Addison rephrased the Homer / Virgil contrast in these terms:

Reading the *Iliad* is like traveling through a country uninhabited, where the fancy is entertained with a thousand savage prospects of vast deserts, wide uncultivated marshes, huge forests, misshapen rocks, and precipices. On the contrary, the *Aeneid* is like a well-ordered garden. [...] In a word, Homer fills his readers with sublime ideas. (3:564–65).

There is no doubt that English soil substantially accentuated the savage aspect of the Homeric sublime; what in Boileau and Longepierre was a brimfully fertile, if untamed, primal nature has here become an inhospitable amalgam of marshes and deserts.⁵ But the notions of sublime creativity and its effects continue to follow the path cleared by the French rehabilitation of Longinus. In terms of poetic production, Addison echoes the Ancient partisans when he attributes Homer’s sublimity to a “natural Genius [...] never disciplined and broken by rules of art” who creates “a thousand beautiful landscapes without any certain order or regularity”; Addison further contrasts this awe-inspiring Homeric “wilderness” to the less exalted Virgilian “skill of the gardener” who meticulously lays out “walks and parterres” (*Spectator* 2:127–29).

It is, however, in his analysis of the *effect* of the sublime that Addison is most innovative. We have seen the emphasis on the reader as a “traveler” who observes a work of art. Addison adapts Locke’s empirical psychology to analyze and categorize the impressions made by artworks; his primary interest is not in the object itself, but in how it is experienced by the beholder, “apprehended,” as he says, “by the imagination” (3:547). When gauging the impact on the reader’s imagination produced by “greatness” (the quality he associates with the Homeric sublime, as opposed to the “beauty” of Virgilian regularity), Addison expands on the ineffable

experience that Boileau first characterized as one which “ravishes, carries away, transports”:

By greatness I [...] mean [...] the prospects of open champaign country, a vast uncultivated desert, of huge heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices, or a wide expanse of waters [...]. Our imagination loves to be filled with an object, or to grasp at anything that is too big for its capacity. [...] The mind of man naturally hates everything that looks like a restraint upon it. [...] On the contrary, a spacious horizon is an image of liberty, where the eye has room to range abroad [...] and to lose itself amidst the variety of objects that offer themselves to its observation. (3:540–41)

Recalling the Longinian interest in the “vastness of the human mind” (Boileau, *Traité*, chapter 29), Addison contends that the imagination takes natural delight in being freed from quotidian logical “restraints”: although the mind may normally desire to exercise rational control over its operations, it sometimes seeks to enjoy its natural “liberty” by “los[ing] itself” in that which exceed the bounds of its capacities.

It is precisely this experiential perspective that Pope brings to the *Iliad*, and he likewise stresses the overwhelming loss of rational control felt by the rapt reader. “No man of a true poetical spirit is master of himself while he reads [Homer]. [T]he reader is hurried out of himself by the force of the Poet’s imagination” (7.4). However, unlike Addison in his philosophical analysis of an abstract and generalized reader, Pope, as a translator championing a Homer under attack, is quite interested in the very real readers at whom he aims his arguments. And, like all defenders of the ancients, he knows that some are resistant, even immune, to the disconcerting effects of the sublime. If we return to the “wild Paradise” passage, we can now better appreciate Pope’s critique of “common Criticks” who “prefer a judicious and methodical Genius [Virgil] to a great and fruitful one [Homer].” It is, after all, far easier to “take in” “an uniform and bounded Walk of Art, than to comprehend the vast and various Extent of Nature.” Conceptually fortified by the renovation of the sublime, as well as by a rising landscape aesthetic and a confidently empirical approach to the sensorial and emotive impact of poetry, Pope here targets the Modern partisans whose rigorous intellectualism blinds them to genius.

It is not, of course, that Pope himself dares promote, or even secretly desires, an unthinking rush into Addison’s sublime “wilderness.” He admits crafting an English translation that at times softens the “shock” to readers in order to preserve a somewhat less disturbing “surprise.”⁶ But Pope wishes to transmit as much of Homer’s original “fire” as is tolerable to his audience, even if it brings some discomfort with the delight. In do-

ing so, he advances, with added reinforcement, the solution first offered by Longepierre, and reasserted by Boivin and Fénelon: the enlightened modern reader must sometimes carefully distinguish between, on the one hand, the faculty of rational and moral judgment and, on the other, that of the imagination. Homer's "poetical fire," Pope contends, "can overpower criticism, and make us admire even while we disapprove" (7:4). Pope applies this dualistic approach not only to poetic form, where Homer's irregularities raise critical scruples while simultaneously generating wonder, but also to moral content. He concedes that Modern critics are right to assert that in Homer's time "a Spirit of Revenge and Cruelty, join'd with the Practice of Rapine and Robbery, reign'd thro' the World"; yet it is precisely that savagery, so frankly depicted and yet so distant from modern civilization, that gratifies the imagination:

When we read Homer we ought to reflect that we are reading the most ancient Author in the Heathen World; and those who consider him in this Light, will double their Pleasure in the Perusal of him. Let them think they are growing acquainted with Nations and People that are now no more; that they are stepping almost three thousand Years back into the remotest Antiquity. [...] By this means alone their greatest Obstacles will vanish; and what usually creates their Dislike, will become a Satisfaction. (7:14)



Such is the "paradox," as Voltaire phrased it, of Homer's appeal: the improbably effective (and even curiously complicitous) coexistence of philosophical "dislike" with aesthetic "satisfaction." That is what Voltaire learned from the English. Or rather what he first ingested from French Ancient partisans such as Fénelon, before fully digesting it in the land he deemed the native soil of tolerance, empiricism, and untamed nature. Those three qualities, we have seen, are capital for Voltaire. Yet he fully understands that appreciating them is a difficult task for the modern French rationalist: it demands tolerance for a different age; faith in one's imaginative and emotional experience of the work; and an appreciation for a landscape unspoiled by contemporary Continental refinement.⁷ However, once contemporary readers have successfully refitted their sensibilities for ancient works, they can, Voltaire asserts, only feel contempt for La Motte and his allies: the Modern party critics of Homer are victims of their hypertrophied intellect, of their "overphilosophical minds, which have stifled all sentiment in themselves" ("des esprits trop philosophiques, qui ont étouffé en eux-mêmes tout sentiment").⁸ The great *philosophe* recognizes the limits

of *l'esprit philosophique*. When examining Homer's theology or ethics, Voltaire of course reserves the right to censure (and he exercises it); but when reading Homer's poetry, he (provisionally) liberates his senses, imagination, and feelings.

Voltaire's trajectory typifies a defining current in French Enlightenment thought. A strong familiarity with Locke and English empiricism, as well as a deep debt to earlier French ancient partisans, will allow Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, in his 1719 founding text of modern French aesthetics, to conceptualize the proper independent domain of literature and the arts, and to establish the indemnity of ancient literature from modern moral and philosophical critiques.⁹ Montesquieu will follow suit with a sensationalist psychology of taste that affirms the ancients' enduring value through the empirical evidence of their power to move the heart, regardless of their rationally determined faults.¹⁰ If the taste for "the sublime has been lost" among too many modern readers, it is because, Montesquieu contends, the "imagination" has been usurped by what is suited to the intellect alone, that is, by the encroaching "nouvelle philosophie" with its extraneous requirements of "clear ideas," "reason," and demonstrable "principles".¹¹ Montesquieu, of course, is no more than Voltaire an enemy of that "new philosophy"; indeed, he uses some of its tools to examine the nonrational faculties of taste and imagination. But he does so to better understand and appreciate their operations, and not, like the Moderns, to better invalidate their valuations.

If we look beyond France, the rising recognition of the autonomy of the imagination and sentiments soon unleashed some radically historicized visions of the most ancient of ancient poetry, now situated in what might be called the cognitive alternate universe of a primitivized humanity. For Vico, Homer is no longer an individual genius, but the expression of an age whose very lack of abstract and logical reason nourishes its facility for imaginative metaphors and vivid narration, its "poetic wisdom." The "wild and savage" force of Homer

is certainly not characteristic of a mind chastened and civilized by any sort of philosophy. Nor could the truculent and savage style in which he describes so many, such varied, and such bloody battles, so many and such extravagantly cruel kinds of butchery as make up all the sublimity of the *Iliad* in particular, have originated in a mind touched and humanized by any philosophy. (*New Science* 303)

The Longinian comparison between Homer's "poetic fury" and his heroes' martial rage, earlier deployed by seventeenth-century Ancients, takes on in Vico a certain lurid intensity (celebrating "butchery" might have been one step too far for Boileau, even if he would have willingly consented

to “bloody”). It also takes on an increasingly inflexible historical logic. If Longepierre and Boivin found cruder and nonphilosophical times highly propitious for sublime poetry, Vico finds them to be *exclusively* so: such primitive periods are the *only* suitable terrain for its proper development.

While Vico was conducting his “search for the true Homer,” another thinker, this one in Scotland, was formulating some parallel reflections. In his 1735 *Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*, Thomas Blackwell was, unlike Vico, not quite ready to jettison the individual genius of Homer the man. But Blackwell does similarly situate the epic poet in an intensely barbarous age, which, he argues, determined the shape and content of the poet’s work. And following the favored paradox of the time, Blackwell ironically congratulates Homer on his good luck in being born “in a wide uncultivated country, not under a regular government,” whose inhabitants lived “ignorant of laws and discipline” (26). Why? It might have been an abysmal time,

yet with all the disorder and misery that attends [such as state], [it] is a fitter subject of an epic poem. [...] For peace, harmony, and good order, which make the happiness of a people, are the bane of a poem that subsists by wonder and surprise. [...] It is thus that a people’s felicity clips the wings of their verse; it affords few materials for admiration or pity. (27–28)

Dacier distinguished between the “politically good” and the “poetically good”; in the rising primitivism of the eighteenth century, the respective concepts of politics and poetry are increasingly not merely segregated (as she sometimes desired); they are fundamentally opposed to each other (as she never dared propose, nor likely ever wished). Poetry of the sublime sort flourishes, Blackwell contends, only in the political disorder of its native “wilderness.” He thus compares modern literary attempts at capturing the ancient sublime to the pale and weakened sprouts of vegetation uprooted and replanted far from their indigenous climate: such poems are “like plants raised up in hotbeds and greenhouses in comparison of those which grow in soils fitted by nature for such productions” (25).

Antiquity is the native jungle; modernity, the engineered greenhouse. Blackwell dispassionately weighs the advantages of each. He proves here something of a botanist of philology, objectively examining the proper terrain for the flourishing of the epic poem. So it is that, in his cool detachment, Blackwell in no way denounces the modern “greenhouse,” despite the feeble imitations it produces. He is quite happy to live in civilized modernity. One can thus understand the wry detachment with which, when assessing the unbridgeable remoteness of primitive genius, he addresses

his dedicatee: “and though the pleasure arising from the sublimer kinds of writing may make us regret the silence of the Muses, yet I am persuaded Your Lordship will join in the wish *that we may never be a proper subject of an heroic poem*” (28; italics in text).

Blackwell offers a prudent and discriminating apology for the sublime, hermetically sealed in its aesthetic envelope. The distancing of ancient poetry has here reached its culmination, but the tools for appreciating its grandeur have also been sharpened. For once poetry is cast as a function of imagination and emotion, and not of moral or political philosophy, then what is worst for reason can be best for art. It is a perspective widely adopted, perhaps most vividly in this passage from Diderot’s 1758 essay, *De la poésie dramatique*:

When does nature prepare the exemplary models for art? It is in those times [...] when one sees before an altar a man with eyes banded, and a priestess extending her hands over him while invoking the heavens and performing expiatory and lustrating ceremonies; when the Pythian priestesses, foaming at the mouth in the presence of a tormenting demon, are seated on tripods and, wild eyed, make the dark recesses of the lair roar with their prophetic cries; when the gods, thirsting for human blood, are only pacified by its effusion [...].

I do not say such customs are good, only that they are poetic.

Quand est-ce que la nature prépare des modèles à l’art? C’est au temps [...] où l’on voit un homme le front ceint de bandelettes devant un autel, et une prêtresse qui étend les mains sur lui en invoquant le ciel et en exécutant les cérémonies expiatoires et lustratives; où des pythies écumantes par la présence d’un démon qui les tourmente, sont assises sur des trépieds, ont les yeux égarés, et font mugir de leurs cris prophétiques le fond obscur des antres; où les dieux, altérés du sang humain, ne sont apaisés que par son effusion [...].

Je ne dis pas que ces mœurs sont bonnes, mais qu’elles sont poétiques.
(*Œuvres* 260–61)

The passage may recall Anne Dacier’s defense of Homer’s frank depiction of the crude ceremonies of paganism, “the caldrons, pots, blood, fat, intestines” that “polite society today finds [so] shocking.” And yet, even as she celebrated their remoteness, Dacier could not help but defend such foreign practices as consonant with those of the Hebraic prophets, and thus worthy, even today, of a certain theological approbation. Diderot, in contrast, presents a catalogue of cruel absurdities—in particular the staged manipulation of superstition and fear by the priesthood—that, as a *philosophe*,

he would normally attack without hesitation in the name of reason. For Diderot is also the heir of Fontenelle and of his rationalist denunciation of pagan oracles and their theological obfuscations. But Diderot has also thoroughly digested the reigning aesthetic paradox: for him, the ethically “good” and the sublimely “poetic” no longer bear a direct relationship but, instead, an inverted one. Thus the *encyclopédiste*, appreciative as he was of harmonious sociability and enlightened governance, had, like Blackwell, to admit their lethal effect on poetry. “In general, the more a people are civilized and polite, the less their manners and morals are poetical; everything grows less vibrant and powerful when sweetened and softened” (“En général, plus un peuple est civilisé, poli, moins ses mœurs sont poétiques; tout s’affaiblit en s’adouissant”; 260–61).

By divorcing poetry from philosophy, figures as diverse as Blackwell and Voltaire, Diderot and Vico, saved, so to speak, Homer for the Enlightenment. But would the first Ancient partisans be so pleased at this rescue operation? In many respects, we can imagine they would. The defenders of Homer had, after all, laid the groundwork for their Enlightenment heirs by consistently arguing for the autonomy of creative literature from the “new philosophy.” If Boileau indeed believed that it was “impertinent” to “judge Homer by Euclid,” if he believed that the sublimity of poetry could best be gauged by its transporting effect on its readers, then he would naturally concur with the following proposition advanced by David Hume: “Euclid has fully explained every quality of the circle; but has not, in any proposition, said a word of its beauty. The reason is evident. Beauty is not a quality of the circle. [...] It is only the effect which that figure produces on the mind.”¹² Likewise, if Boivin took such great care to separate the business of “poets” from that of “philosophers” and “legislators,” then he would surely be pleased to hear Diderot’s adamant call for the *Encyclopédie* to segregate poetry and the arts from all other philosophical, moral, utilitarian topics.¹³

Yes, the Ancients would to an extent be pleased with these Enlightenment elaborations of their program. But perhaps also troubled, even vexed. While some Ancient partisans (Longepierre, Boivin) go quite far in exempting poetry from the requirements of moral and political philosophy, none were yet ready to accept the axiomatic opposition of the two forms of discourse. The champions of Homer and Pindar seemed to generally hope that, while respecting their distinct domains, good poetry and good politics would most often work in tandem, or at least in quiet and creative tension. But these Ancient forerunners would no doubt have been more troubled by the hardening historical approach that their successors brought to bear on literature. For Longepierre and Fénelon, early antiquity

furnished the ideal terrain for sublime poetry, but not the sole and exclusive one; it was admirably equipped to nourish genius, but it did not absolutely determine the existence of genius or fix its course. Boileau fought hard against d'Aubignac's erasure of Homer the author; he would likely have felt little better about Vico's replacement of the single poet by the collective voice of a primitive people, even if lauded as the source of the epic's sublimity. Once not just associated with antiquity, but *restricted* to antiquity, the grand forms of poetry (tragedy, epic) become simply impossible to realize in modern times. Blackwell called on his readers to be comforted by the absence of contemporary epic poetry, and not to "regret the silence of the Muses." That is a silence that the earlier champions of antiquity would surely have found less felicitous. Boileau, Racine, and Fénelon all believed in the continuing potential of the sublime to erupt from modern works. Indeed, they attempted to create such works themselves. But when the presence of writhing and foaming Pythian priestesses is a requirement for producing sublime poetry, it becomes an extinct species, one at best reproduced and studied in Blackwell's "greenhouse" pots.

It is yet another of history's ironies that by embracing the remoteness of antiquity in order to better experience it, the Ancients assured the continuing power of Homer while simultaneously sealing (at least temporarily) the fate of the genre he practiced. In the realm of aesthetics, it was in the end the Ancient partisans, and not the Moderns, who encountered the greatest success in the Enlightenment. Indeed, more success than they wagered for. Far from conducting a rearguard action to be dismissed by the following generations, they argued well for the renovation of certain ancient principles—too well for their own good. In the end, Boileau might have preferred to do battle with La Motte, who at least took Homer as a serious enough threat to want to contain and correct him. The easy tolerance of the Enlightenment and its aesthetic compartmentalization of the sublime might make oddly appealing Perrault's call for bowdlerization. In a more enlightened age, censorship of antiquity was homage perhaps too rarely paid.



Yet that cruel homage was not entirely absent. There still remained, even at the height of the Enlightenment, certain thinkers who did not so easily accept the segregation of poetics and politics. Occasional calls still came for the censorship of ancient literature, and a few were heeded. One of those calls came from what would at first seem a most unlikely source. A parting glance at Jean-Jacques Rousseau will reveal the ever-shifting complica-

tions in the ongoing interplay of ancient and modern. In certain respects, Rousseau seems to be the perfect heir to the Ancient party, and he has often been viewed as such.¹⁴ His disdain for modern refinements and gallantry, his idolization of nature, his attachment to indomitable ancient liberty, all made him an exemplary proponent of simpler and ruder times. It is no surprise, then, that a half-century later he regularly blasted Modern partisans such as La Motte and Terrasson, or that he praised ancient works as “closer to nature” and “truer to their own native genius.”¹⁵ Indeed, in one such passage he took up the old battle over the gardens of Alcinous, praising (in echo of Longepierre and Pope) their rustic charms, while deriding people of difficult taste (read the Moderns) who found the Homeric landscape “too simple and unadorned” (“trop simple et trop peu paré”; *Émile*, in *OC* 4:783). Furthermore, in at least one important respect, Rousseau opened a new avenue for the admiration of Homer by qualifying him as an entirely oral poet, one thus closer to the primal sensuality of verse:

It has often come to my mind to doubt not only that Homer knew how to write, but even that writing was known in his time. [...] It was only when Greece began to abound in books and written poetry that all the charm of Homer made itself fully felt by comparison. Other poets wrote, but Homer alone sang, and his divine songs only ceased to be heard with enchantment when Europe found itself covered with barbarians who attempted to judge that which they could not feel.

Il m'est venu bien souvent dans l'esprit de douter non seulement qu'Homère sût écrire, mais même qu'on écrivît de son temps. [...] Ce fut quand la Grèce commença d'abonder en livres et en poésie écrite que tout le charme de celle d'Homère se fit sentir par comparaison. Les autres poètes écrivaient, Homère seul avait chanté, et ces chants divins n'ont cessé d'être écoutés avec ravissement que quand l'Europe s'est couverte de barbares qui se sont mêlés de juger ce qu'ils ne pouvaient sentir. (*Essai sur l'origine des langues*, in *OC* 5:389–90)

The disdain witnessed here for “written poetry,” however, should alert the reader to the very serious limitations Rousseau placed on his appreciation of ancient literature. Such limitations should hardly be astonishing, coming as they did from a thinker who first made his name with a rhetorical *tour de force*, decrying not just the progress but the very existence of the arts and sciences. Antiquity, including the Greek antiquity championed by Boileau and Pope, hardly escaped his censure. Rousseau’s respect for primitive (and happily illiterate) poetry may extend, if barely, up to the age of Homer, but hardly after.

As for the glory of classical Athens, so celebrated by Ancient partisans, Rousseau has only scorn. "Always learned, always voluptuous, always slavish" ("toujours savante, toujours voluptueuse, et toujours esclave"), the city represents a fatal step forward in the infernal march of the "progress of the arts [and] the dissolution of morals" ("le progrès des arts [et] la dissolution des mœurs"; *First Discourse*, in *OC* 3:10). If, in contrast, Rousseau lavishes praise on Sparta and the early Roman republic, there should be no surprise: neither was known for its literary or artistic accomplishments. Furthermore, his moral and philosophical critique of ancient cultures does not spare the very heart of Homer's universe, the aspect of his work for which the Ancient partisans expended their most precious energies: pagan mythology. Indeed, Rousseau sounds very much like the first Modern leader, Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, when he denounces the use of pagan adornments in modern art, castigating the "images of all the way-laying distractions of the heart and reason, carefully drawn from ancient mythology" ("des images de tous les égarements du cœur et de la raison, tirées soigneusement de l'ancienne mythologie"; 3:25). As for the learned humanists who study the "daydreams of mythology," Rousseau can, like Perrault, only laugh at their idle pursuits (3:213).

But when not merely mocking, a more severe Rousseau comes into view, one whose zeal against the corrupting influence of ancient literature exceeds even the fervor of Perrault and Terrasson. In his *Lettre à M. d'Alembert*, Rousseau urges not just radically revising and correcting the heroes and myths of ancient drama, but banishing them entirely from the modern city:

What does one learn from *Phaedra* and *Oedipus*, except that man is not free, and that the heavens punish crimes that they themselves have ordained to be committed? What does one learn from *Medea*, if not that the fury of jealousy can render a mother cruel and denatured? [...] It is not even true that murder and parricide are always portrayed [on stage] as odious. By means of who knows what commodious suppositions, these acts are rendered permissible, or pardonable. It is hard not to excuse the incestuous *Phaedra* as she spills innocent blood.

Qu'apprend-on dans *Phèdre* et dans *Œdipe*, sinon que l'homme n'est pas libre, et que le ciel le punit des crimes qu'il lui fait commettre. Qu'apprend-on dans *Médée*, si ce n'est jusqu'où la fureur de la jalousie peut rendre une mère cruelle et dénaturée ? [...] Il n'est pas même vrai que le meurtre et le parricide y soient [au théâtre] toujours odieux. À la faveur de je ne sais quelles commodes suppositions, on les rend permis, ou

pardonnables. On a peine à ne pas excuser Phèdre incestueuse et versant le sang innocent. (*Lettre à M. d'Alembert* 90–91)

Rousseau's indignant interrogations echo those of La Motte when, as noted in chapter 8, he sternly asked: "Venus protects the perfidious Paris; Jupiter protects the unjust Achilles. Are these examples that encourage virtue in men?" In short, Rousseau adopts the poetics of exemplarity so dear to the Moderns and, like them, rejects the Aristotelian defense of tragic pathos (69–92). Defending Geneva's ban on theatrical performances, he erects himself and his native city as the guardians of "public rectitude" ("droiture publique") over unruly literary pleasures. And like his Modern predecessors, he invokes the authority of Plato against Homer in order to justify the prohibition of immoral literature (220). It is not, however, that Rousseau himself is insensitive to the aesthetic pleasures afforded by the disturbing depiction of incest and parricide. He admits to being personally "charmed" by Racine's Greek tragedies. But he finds Voltaire's "paradox" unsustainable. Following, instead, Perrault's dictum that "it is up to the philosopher to lead the poet," Rousseau determines that his overarching "love of the public good" must rightfully dictate poetry's sacrifice: "I am" he concludes, "forced to censure" ("je suis forcé de censurer"; 242). Of course, in the end Rousseau must admit that people do need some form of theatrical and artistic entertainment. He thus adopts the solution proposed by Plato and seconded by the Moderns: discarding the old, the modern world must craft new forms of art aimed at inculcating "useful lessons" for the public good (225).

Rousseau has, in effect, turned certain of the political and moral arguments of the Ancient party against its literary and aesthetic ones. Particularly influenced by Fénelon, he has appropriated the admiration for the simpler customs and freer institutions of the early Greco-Roman world in order to better condemn the refinements and turpitude of its drama and poetry. Sparta has been enlisted against Athens, "la bonne politique" re-armed against "la bonne poétique." For Rousseau, the two cannot be safely isolated from each other, nor live in creative friction. Rousseau's idealization of antiquity, rather than privileging its literature, thus indicts it. Unfortunately, that which Boileau or Racine held most dear, the tragic pathos and sublime realism of the Greeks, must now be sacrificed to a different ancient (and republican) cause. Rousseau again sets antiquity against antiquity. Despite the separate peace temporarily proposed by Enlightenment aesthetics, the struggle between philosophy and poetry lives to see a new day.

Notes

For authors' full names, full titles, and publishing details, see the bibliography.

Introduction: Experiencing Antiquity

1. Anne Dacier, preface to *L'Iliade*, p. xxv.
2. Longepierre, *Discours*. All translations from the French, unless otherwise noted, are mine. In the interests of consistency, I have modernized throughout the spelling of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French texts, which are cited sometimes from original and sometimes from modern editions.
3. Hereafter, the abbreviation *OC* will be used in text and notes for references to any authors whose *Œuvres complètes* are listed in the bibliography.
4. "[C]e pouvoir explosif des Classiques, dont les œuvres possèdent la minutieuse, imprévisible et dangereuse architecture des machines infernales" (Barthes, "Plaisir aux classiques," in *OC* 1:60).

Chapter 1: Whose Ancients & Moderns?

1. The terms "ancient" and "modern" will be capitalized here when referring to the parties (and their positions) in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century quarrel; they are not capitalized when referring to the historical time periods under debate.
2. According to Perrault, Racine, a fervent Ancient apologist, simply counted the poem "a pure game of wit" ("un pur jeu d'esprit") to be shrugged off rather than seriously contested (*Mémoires* 137).
3. Through the perspicacious voice of Usbek in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (no. 36), in *OC* vol. 1.
4. The mock-epic deflation of the quarrel began at its very inception, with Callières's 1688 *Histoire poétique*.
5. From Rigault's groundbreaking 1859 study *Histoire de la Querelle*, through J. B. Bury's *The Idea of Progress* and R. F. Jones's *Ancients and Moderns*. For a concise history of the twentieth-century scholarship on the quarrel, see Patey, "Ancients and Moderns" 32–34).
6. For the Renaissance, Baron's work "The Querelle" was seminal; for the medieval

tradition, Curtius's *European Literature*; for the Greco-roman roots, L. Edelstein's *The Idea of Progress* and, more recently, Hartog's *Anciens, modernes, sauvages*. Hartog's book and another work on the question of ancient and moderns, Yilmaz's *Le temps moderne*, devote surprisingly little attention to the period of the quarrel itself, concentrating instead on earlier or later periods.

7. DeJean, sympathetic to the Modern cause in her *Ancients against Moderns*, aligns the Ancient party with late twentieth-century opposition to multiculturalism and canon reformation; in contrast, Fumaroli ("Les abeilles et les araignées"), who is followed by Finkelkraut (*Nous autres, modernes*), praises Ancient apologists such as Swift for their timeless critique of modernity's hermetic self-obsession. These essays make compelling cases for their cause; however, the answers appear so clear-cut, and the scales so tilted, that we are left wondering how serious minds could devote so much time and intellectual energy to the problem, or even dare to maintain a reasonable position in opposition to those presented.

8. In particular by Levine, in *Battle*.

9. Huet makes the point in his 1692 letter to Perrault: "our own age, being an interested party in this case, cannot be the judge" ("notre siècle étant partie en cette cause, il ne doit pas en être juge"; *La Querelle* 389).

10. Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:210. See also Terrasson's direct critique of any notion of a "consentement unanime" among the ancients regarding Homer's perfection (preface to *Dissertation*, 1–li).

11. The same argument is made by Longepierre, who foresees how future centuries will avenge Homer by dismissing in turn the "moderns" who attack him. Longepierre, though, stresses a pact more of mutual tolerance and "equity" than of admiration between historical epochs (*Discours* 96–99).

12. Terrasson sums up this "maintenance of the system of human progress" ("continuation du système des progrès de l'esprit humain") as a series of steps ("gradation") in which antiquity has "its infancy at the time of Homer, its adolescence in the time of the Greeks, and its majority in the time of the Romans" ("son enfance au temps d'Homère, son adolescence au temps des Grecs, et sa majorité au temps des Latins") (preface to *Dissertation*, xxxv).

13. Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:169. See also Levine: "There was a closer affinity between the real conditions of life and culture, and the true sensibilities of the English and the Roman Augustans, than there could possibly be with the more remote Greeks. It was after all the "Augustan," not the "Periclean"—much less the "Homeric"—age that began with Charles and Louis XIV" (*Battle*, 123).

14. Perrault cites Cicero thus in the *Parallèle*: "we are wiser in things we have invented ourselves than the Greeks were, and as to those things that we have taken from them, we have rendered them better than they were before" ("nous sommes plus sages dans les choses que nous inventons de nous-mêmes que n'ont été les Grecs, et qu'à l'égard de celles que nous avons prises d'eux, nous les avons rendu [sic] meilleures qu'elles n'étaient"; *Parallèle* 1:16). Perrault later comments: "I admit that I have great esteem for Cicero; as he was a modern in relation to Demosthenes, [...] he was [...] more learned and better raised and was born in an age where there had been many new advances in the art of speaking well" ("Je vous avoue que j'estime fort Cicéron; comme il est un Moderne à l'égard de Démosthène, [...] il était [...] plus savant et mieux élevé et il est venu dans un siècle où il s'était fait beaucoup de nouvelles découvertes dans l'art de bien dire"; 2:184–85). As for the

more ancient Demosthenes, “all his inferiority is alone caused by his coming to the world in a more ancient age, and for that reason, an age that cannot be as beautiful, as delicate, and as polished as that of Augustus, for the three hundred years or so between the Greek orator and the Roman orator create a space of time in which the knowledge that serves the art of speaking well can and did in fact undergo considerable augmentation” (“tout son désavantage ne procède que d’être venu au monde dans un siècle plus ancien, et qui par cette raison n’a pu être aussi beau, aussi délicat et aussi poli que celui d’Auguste, car trois cent cinquante ans ou environ qu’il y a entre l’orateur grec et l’orateur romain, font une espace de temps où toutes les connaissances qui servent à l’art de bien parler on[t] pu recevoir et ont reçu effectivement un accroissement considérable”; 2:189).

15. Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:103. See also 1:46. Despite these concessions, Perrault naturally reserves some acid for the “obscurité” of Plato (2:102).

16. See La Motte’s 1714 ode “L’ombre d’Homère,” in *OC*. See also Rabau, “Portrait” and “Homère.”

17. On Montaigne’s admiration for antiquity, see Ford, “Montaigne’s Homer.”

18. For the broader implications of the metaphor of antiquity as childhood, see chapter 4.

19. Chapelain, *De la lecture des vieux romans* 219; see Jauss, “La ‘modernité’” 186.

20. After commenting on the profound primitiveness of the French Middle Ages, Fénelon remarks how very recent the progress of modernity is: “Without going further back, the change in *mores* is almost incredible just since the time of Henri IV” (“Sans remonter plus haut, le changement des mœurs est presque incroyable depuis le règne d’Henri IV”; *Lettre à l’Académie*, in *OC* 2:1183).

21. See chapter 2 (“Conflicted Positions”).

22. Indeed, we will see that the Ancient party threatened, according to Desmarests de Saint Sorlin, to “make us pagans” once again (“nous faire païens”; *Clovis* 707).

23. See Boileau’s *Arrêt burlesque*, in *OC* 327–31. The leading voice of the Ancient party in England, William Temple, likewise rails against Aristotle, “the philosophical Tyrant” that still served as authority at the universities (see Levine, *Battle* 14, and Scodel, “Seventeenth-Century” 549–50).

24. Longepierre, *Discours* 91–123, 150–52 (Homer); 130–136 (Virgil).

25. “Cette distance immense qui sépare [l’Antiquité] de nous” (Longepierre, *Discours* 46); “cette Antiquité la plus éloignée” (95).

26. Or, as William Temple phrased it: later writers “do but trace over the paths that have been beaten by the ancients [...] and are at best but copies of those originals” (“An Essay” [3:431], quoted in Patey, “Ancients and Moderns” 47).

27. Settis, *Future* 41. See his overview on the Enlightenment’s treatment of “Greek ‘Classical’ versus Roman ‘Classical’” (35–41).

28. For an introduction to the Greek/Roman rivalry of the eighteenth century, see Buxton, *Grecian Taste*; Fumaroli, “Le retour à l’antique”; Grell, *Le dix-huitième siècle*; Ferris, *Romanticism*; G. W. Clarke, *Rediscovering*.

29. Any such approach is naturally indebted to Paul Hazard’s seminal *Crise* and its situating of early Enlightenment conflict in the later French classical period (1680–1715). The recent work of Jonathan Israel has pushed that crisis back even earlier, to the mid-seventeenth century, which accords well with the early French manifestations of the quarrel. The tendency in both these authors, however, is to continue to view the Ancient party

as one of conservative resistance; I believe, in contrast, the debate was between two innovative responses to changing worldviews. For a heterogeneous view of French classicism as a site of tension rather than stability, see also Hammond, *Creative Tensions*, and Merlin-Kajman, "Un siècle."

30. Geertz, "The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man," in *Interpretation* 35).

31. For seventeenth-century "ethnocentrism," see Todorov, *Nous* 22; on the presentism of the French absolutist period, see Hartog, *Anciens* 203.

32. In placing Vico at the forefront of this movement, Berlin in fact pushes back earlier in the eighteenth century the full development of the historicist approach, and revises the canonical work of Friedrich Meinecke, for whom Vico was simply one "precursor" among others (Shaftesbury, Lafitau, etc.) of the great late eighteenth-century German trio of Möser, Herder, and Goethe. It is a schema that is still current in cultural history, for example in art history where, according to Alex Potts, Winckelmann, as reread by Herder and Goethe, "for the first time made obvious how alien" Greek antiquity was to the modern world (Potts, in Winckelmann, *History* 30).

33. Berlin cites such earlier French humanist historians as Bodin. See Berlin's *Crooked Timber* 55 and *Against the Current* 86, 104–5.

34. Racine, preface to *Bajazet*, in *OC I*, 625.

35. Thus Racine, in his one tragedy in the modern world (the Ottoman Empire of *Bajazet*), in order to make the Turks worthy of tragic interest, describes them as honorary ancients. "Ancients" are broadly defined here as all those different from the modern French: "We look at them as ancients before their time" ("On les regarde de bonne heure comme Anciens"; *OC I*:625). Of course, I am not suggesting that Racine somehow beat Vico in the race to develop a historicist thought. Racine was not a philosopher of history. His interest was purely in the aesthetic effects of cultural difference, not in its broader intellectual consequences, which he probably never theorized on even his most contemplative afternoons. If he did, he might very well have adhered in general to a "uniformitarian" view of cultural history. But not when he considered the function of literature. There, historical difference played a crucial role in advancing a heightened sensitivity to the awe-inspiring, sometimes terrifying, world of tragic otherness.

36. Levine, *Between* ix. Both Levine's Ancient and Modern parties exist in a pre-historicist world and refuse to recognize any serious rupture between the Greco-roman past and the present. "Modern historical scholarship had developed by 1700 to the point where it was capable of calling into question the very foundations of *ancienneté*, but it was unwilling, as long as the classics still seemed to teach their practical lessons, to follow through and expose the gap between ancient and modern worlds as finally unbridgeable. In the end, the moderns, those same scholarly innovators who fought in the battle of the books, were too much ancients at heart to give full play to their potentially revolutionary insights" (*Battle* 7). For Levine the recognition of this temporal rupture has to wait until "sometime in the nineteenth century" (7), though it was earlier in Germany, in the second half of eighteenth century, that "the dissenting voice of historicism" was first heard. In any case, Levine, like Berlin, believes that "both sides [in the Quarrel] implicitly accepted as timeless and universal very much the same set of literary and artistic standards" (*Battle*, 28). Levine has since further predated the historicist break with this atemporal consensus, naturally to (whom else but?) Vico (*Autonomy*, 127–53). More recently, Pocock's reflections on the quarrel have

bracingly redrawn some of the lines between Ancient and Modern positions in the mid-eighteenth century, but his view of the late seventeenth-century quarrel remains indebted to Levine's view of a conservative Ancient party (*Barbarism* 152–59, 189–207). Additionally, the British side of the quarrel was conditioned by different social and political circumstances that could reinforce the traditionalist view of the Ancient party, which tended to be associated with a conception of the “gentleman” and his proper cultivation. The French sociological framework of the *honnête homme*, on the other hand, could equally well be appropriated by Ancients or Moderns—as, we shall see, it indeed was.

37. For all their profound differences, Joan DeJean (*Ancients*) and Marc Fumaroli (“Les abeilles”) can both be said to fully concur with this vision of the Ancient party as the voice of tradition and cultural continuity, though that voice seduces the second as strongly as it repels the first.

38. Saint-Evremond, “Dissertation sur le Grand Alexandre,” in *Œuvres* 2:87. Though the remark refers in particular to Alexander's Asian conquests, the passage is indicative of Saint-Evremond's plea for recognizing the vast and frequently irreconcilable difference between contemporary life and classical antiquity, including that of the Greek or Roman West. Saint-Evremond himself represents perhaps the typical conflicted writer of the time, frequently shifting between Ancient and Modern positions.

39. The very title of Borgerhoff's *The Freedom of French Classicism*, proposed in 1950 as an audacious paradox, summarizes his refusal to view classicism as any form of “pedantic imitation” or subservience to the “tyranny of the classics.” And though he devotes few pages to the quarrel, he boldly asserts that “the Ancients were the liberals and the dogmatists were the Moderns” (4). Grell has likewise highlighted the Ancients' embrace of “l'altérité culturelle” and “la relativité des goûts et des idées” through history (“La querelle” 23, 26), and Hepp the Ancients' “ouverture d'esprit” to historical difference in opposition to the Moderns' intolerance (“La querelle” 393). Finally, Thomas Pavel's analysis of a seventeenth-century historical imagination that encompasses a passionate taste for projecting oneself into profoundly different time periods (“hétérochronie”) proves a useful antidote to scholars' flattening of French attitudes toward antiquity (*L'art de l'éloignement* 24 and *passim*).

40. On the important, if too long neglected, impact of seventeenth-century studies of antiquity on the Enlightenment, in particular on the *encyclopédistes*, see Dan Edelstein, “Humanism.”

41. “L'empire de la coutume est bien plus vaste que celui de la nature, il s'étend sur les mœurs, sur tous les usages” (Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs* 487). See Cassirer's commentary in *Philosophy* 219.

42. Hume, “Of the Study of History,” in *Standard* 96. For Hume and the quarrel, see chapter 8.

Chapter 2: Asserting Modernity

1. On “tripartition” and the new “caesura” between ancients and moderns, see Jauss, “La ‘modernité’” 171–73. Jauss argues that this tripartition will fade with the rise of the Romantic movement. Antiquity loses its privilege, and the previous neoclassical age of the seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries becomes the new “ancient” as opposed to the modernity of the Romantics. Hence a return to a binary opposition between the present and

past, which characterized the medieval conceptions of *modernus*. For a closer examination of the temporal gulf created by the humanist conception of the “dark ages,” see Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne* 29–43.

2. Kelley first fully elaborated this argument in his *Foundations* (7–8). Kelley argues that even though Renaissance humanists idealized the past to a degree, engaging in “myth-making” of a golden classical age, they were also increasingly aware of historical difference, creating “a new kind of myth which, it might be argued, lies at the roots of historicism” (8).

3. Grafton, *Defenders* 27. E. Bury likewise argues that the development of *ars critica* in the seventeenth century leads philologists to “perceive the alterity concealed by tradition, by taking into account the dense historical layering that both constitutes this tradition and separates us from its origins” (“percevoir l’*altérité* que recèle la tradition, en prenant conscience de l’épaisseur temporelle qui, à la fois, constitue cette tradition et nous sépare de ses origines”) Thus is born a new form of “historicity” from “this ‘distancing’ which results from the philological method born with the Renaissance” (“cette ‘mise à distance’ qui est le fruit de la méthode philologique née avec la Renaissance”; “La philologie” 9, 24). See also Vasoli on the “coupure irréversible” of the Renaissance with antiquity (“La première querelle” 77–78), and Schiffman on Renaissance’s “historical relativism” (*On the Threshold* 25–52).

4. Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:38–40. The Ancient party in reply denigrated Scaliger as nearly universally “scorned” by other scholars for his criticism of Homer (Boivin, *Apologie* 6).

5. Illustrated by the defensive attack launched by Jonathan Swift, as a champion of the Ancients, against Bentley (See Levine, *Battle*, 110–20).

6. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* 2:272).

7. See Pagden, *European Encounters* 28, 80–81; and Grafton, *New Worlds* 35–48. See also the comparisons made between the New World and *non-Greco-Roman* antiquity, such as Egypt or prehistoric Britons or Celts (Grafton 124–30).

8. On Montaigne’s relation to the New World and its parallels with antiquity, see Desan, *Montaigne*; Fumaroli, “Les Anciens”; Lestringant, *Le Huguenot* 133–48, 249–57, and “Exotisme”; and Todorov, *Nous* 59–75.

9. On Fontenelle’s attitude toward Montaigne, see Dagen’s introduction to his edition of the *Nouveaux Dialogues* (35, 67, 79–80) and his “Pour une histoire”; and my “Fontenelle.”

10. This attack presages Fontenelle’s later one against Greek credulity, in the *Histoire des oracles*, where the debunking of pagan superstitions serves a larger purpose of unmasking all religious mummery.

11. “I contend that this has never been in keeping with any nation’s customs, even to the Iroquois” (“[J]e soutiens que ce n’a jamais été les mœurs d’aucune nation, non pas même des Iroquois”; Perrault, *Parallèle*, preface to vol. 2, n.p.).

12. This will be a commonplace by the early eighteenth century. Voltaire, for example, remarks in his *Essai sur la poésie épique* that “our customs are more different from those of the Trojan war than they are from those of those of the American [Indians]” (“Nos coutumes sont plus différentes de celles des héros du siège de Troie que de celles des Américains”; *English Essays*, 408).

13. Passing along the way Lafitau’s influential 1724 *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*. See Racault, “Homère aux Amériques”; and, more broadly, Simonsuuri, *Homer’s Original Genius* 75–132).

14. Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne* 29, 206.

15. Perrault praises “la machine à faire des bas de soie” and “une machine qui forme cent mailles tout d’un coup” (*Parallèle* 1:76).

16. See Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:62–67; 4:114–17, 285. Perrault must of course reply to those (like Montaigne) who assert the ancient East Asian roots of such technological breakthroughs, and he predictably does so by dismissing all ancient Chinese claims to true advancement (4:88–90, 121).

17. We find the same concession in Perrault (*Parallèle*, 1:73–74, 86–87) to the merits of ancient “inventeurs des arts,” though it is quickly qualified by claims of modern superiority.

18. This argument is elaborated both by Perrault, “nature is immutable and always the same in what it produces” (“la nature est immuable et toujours la même dans ses productions”; *Parallèle* 1:88), and, most famously, by Fontenelle in his *Digression*, “In its hands, nature molds a certain clay that is always the same [...] and certainly it did not shape Plato, Demosthenes, or Homer from a finer or better prepared clay than that of our philosophers, our orators, and our poets of today” (“La nature a entre les mains une certaine pâte qui est toujours la même [...] et certainement elle n’a point formé Platon, Démosthène ni Homère d’une argile plus fine ni mieux préparée que nos philosophes, nos orateurs et nos poètes d’aujourd’hui”; *OC* 2:414).

19. Pierre Bayle, *Nouvelles de la République des lettres*, April 1684, cited in Ferrier-Caverivière, *L’image* 365; see also in Jauss, “La ‘modernité’” 179. On the late seventeenth-century self-awareness, and self-celebration, of a new enlightened “age of philosophy,” see Israel, *Radical* 10–11 and *passim*; Hepp, *Homère* 475; Ferrier-Caverivière, *L’image* 372–74.

20. “Indeed, as for what is most basic in philosophy and gives it the widest application, I mean the manner of reasoning, it has in our own age been perfected to the extreme” (“En effet, ce qu’il y a de principal dans la philosophie, et ce qui de là se répand sur tout, je veux dire la manière de raisonner, s’est extrêmement perfectionné dans ce siècle”; Fontenelle, *OC* 2:419–20).

21. For the opposition of “raison naturelle toute pure” and “livres anciens” see Descartes’s *Discours de la méthode*, part 6, p. 77. For the critical demolition of the humanities and history, see part 1, pp. 5–9.

22. Some of Fontenelle’s shifts can be explained by the gradual evolution from his more humanist freethinking origins, skeptical and ironic, to his later, more dogmatic embrace of Cartesian rationalism, beginning in the 1680s. I would argue, however, that a certain ambivalence can be found throughout his work, even admitting this evolution. See Dagen, “Pour une histoire”; Niderst, *Fontenelle* 375–77; Martin, “Fontenelle”; and my “Fontenelle.”

23. Although the influence of British empiricism in France is most often associated with Montesquieu and Voltaire as of the 1720s, Israel compellingly dates the “collapse of Cartesianism” in the period of 1680–1720 (*Radical* 477–501). There existed an earlier French current of empiricist thought, notably with Gassendi, but the importation of Locke and Boyle played a central role for as early a figure as Daniel Huet, a moderate defender of the Ancients (Popkin, 217, 278, 281; Israel, *Radical* 487–88). For a historical analysis redrawing the early seventeenth-century battle lines between Newtonian empiricism and Cartesian rationalism, see Shank, *Newton Wars*.

24. Boileau’s phrase, to which I will return in part 3, is reported by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau (*Correspondance* 1:15).

25. "Reason often finds only one path forward" ("La raison, pour marcher, n'a souvent qu'une voie"; Boileau, *Art poétique* I, in *OC* 158).

26. For condemnations of Ronsard's dependence on antiquity, see Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:66–67, 3:162; and Boileau, *Art Poétique* I, in *OC* 160.

27. I will turn to this aspect of Boileau in part 3.

28. Perrault makes much of Boileau's own unacknowledged modernity, claiming that the inventiveness ("invention") of Boileau's works renders them categorically different from, and superior to, those of his adored ancient models (*Parallèle* 3:228–31).

Chapter 3: Splintered Paths of Progress

1. Consider for example the question of intellectual versus moral progress. Fontenelle takes on the question in his imaginary dialogue between Cortez and Montezuma. After suggesting that the more primitive societies of ancient Athens or the Aztecs had an underdeveloped critical sense and were thus given to error and superstition, the dialogue then turns to a debate over whether the same negative judgment might be rendered, not in the intellectual sphere, but in the moral one. Although the dialogue gives no clear answer, it certainly casts serious doubt on the idea of moral progress. Perrault, we will see, seems much more confident in the idea of moral progress.

2. Interestingly enough, C. P. Snow's canonical distinction in *The Two Cultures* only reinforces the caricature of an implacably conservative and "traditional" literary culture opposed to the modern scientific one. The present study is of course intended to question such assumptions.

3. See Cave, "Ancients and Moderns" 420–21.

4. "The following dialogues will treat astronomy, geography, navigation, physics, chemistry, mechanics, and all other forms of knowledge where it is incontestable that we triumph over the ancients, in order to proceed next to eloquence and poetry, where not only is our superiority disputed, but it is claimed that we are much inferior. The order of this approach will lead to a very natural conclusion, that if we have such a visible advantage in the arts [and sciences of the first group] whose secrets can be calculated and measured, then all that remains is the difficulty of winning people over in the realm of things of taste and fancy, such as the beauties of poetry and eloquence" ("Les dialogues suivants traiteront de l'astronomie, de la géographie, de la navigation, de la physique, de la chimie, des mécaniques, et de toutes les autres connaissances, où il est incontestable que nous l'emportons sur les anciens, pour de là venir à l'éloquence et à la poésie, où non seulement on nous dispute la préséance, mais où l'on prétend que nous sommes beaucoup inférieurs. Cette méthode fournira une induction très naturelle, que si nous avons un avantage visible dans les Arts dont les secrets se peuvent calculer et mesurer, il n'y a que la seule impossibilité de convaincre les gens dans les choses de goût et de fantaisie, comme sont les beautés de la poésie et de l'éloquence"; Perrault, *Parallèle*, preface to vol. 1 [n.p.]).

5. "As concerns eloquence and poetry, which are the principal subject of the debate between Ancients and Moderns, even though they are not themselves very important, I think that the ancients were able to attain perfection in this area, because, as I've said, one can attain it in a few centuries" ("Pour ce qui est de l'éloquence et de la poésie, qui sont le sujet de la principale contestation entre les Anciens et les Modernes, quoiqu'elles ne soient pas en elles-mêmes fort importantes, je crois que les anciens en ont pu atteindre la perfection,

parce que, comme j'ai dit, on la peut atteindre en peu de siècles" (Fontenelle, *Digression*, in *OC* 2:421).

6. See chapter 10 ("Philosophy's Turn").

7. "We have had our minds enriched by an infinity of poetic concepts which the ancients furnished us with and which we have before our eyes" ("nous avons l'esprit enrichi d'une infinité d'idées poétiques qui nous sont fournies par les anciens que nous avons devant les yeux"; Fontenelle, *OC* 2:427).

8. "There are even new genres, such as gallant letters, tales and short stories, and operas, of which we have for each an excellent author, and to which antiquity has nothing to offer up for competition" ("Il y a même des espèces nouvelles, comme les lettres galantes, les contes, les opéras, dont chacune nous a fourni un auteur excellent, auquel l'Antiquité n'a rien à opposer"; Fontenelle, *OC* 2:429).

9. "Operas, gallant poetry, and burlesque [mock-epic]. It must be admitted that these genres of poetry are new, and were unknown to antiquity" ("Les opéras, les poésies galantes et le burlesque. Il faut convenir que ces genres de poésie sont nouveaux, et n'ont point été connus de toute l'Antiquité"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 3:280–81).

10. Interestingly, Perrault also turns to the visual arts, where the diverse paths of progress follow the same paradigm as in other human endeavors. The "simple" arts, which demand the fewest rules or "precepts," are perfected first; the complex arts, on the other hand, are not to be perfected until modern times. Thus Perrault admits that the Greeks excelled in statuary, which demands little "reflection" and abstract thought, as opposed to bas-reliefs and painting, which require a deeper understanding of spatial relations and perspective (*Parallèle* 1:188–91).

11. "I would thus like that eloquence in general be considered nothing but the art of speaking well according to the subject treated, and according to the place, time, and persons addressed" ("Je voudrais donc que l'éloquence en général ne fût autre chose que l'art de bien parler selon la nature du sujet que l'on traite, et selon les lieux, les temps, et les personnes"; Perrault, *Parallèle*, 2:42–43). It includes thus the literary character of writings in philosophy, history, law, and even prose fiction, all of which Perrault deals with under the heading of "eloquence."

12. Interestingly enough, Fontenelle asserts here that political conditions play a much smaller role in the evolution of poetry, because of poetry's fundamental lack of political utility: it is "good for nothing" ("bonne à rien"), a purely creative endeavor that "has been the same under all kinds of governments" ("ç'a toujours été la même chose dans toutes sortes de gouvernements"; *OC* 2:422). In contrast, we will see that Perrault's conception of the superiority of modern poetry is deeply linked to perceived modern political achievements.

13. "The just and legitimate domination of princes, which it pleases Heaven to give us for our good, maintains us in the enjoyment of a sweet and tranquil civil peace" ("la juste et légitime domination des princes qu'il plaît au Ciel de nous donner pour notre bien, nous maintient dans la jouissance d'un doux et paisible repos"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:254).

14. See Hartog, *Anciens* 45–76.

15. The letter was probably composed around 1697 (Boileau, *OC* 1109–10). The truce had first been formally contracted in a 1694 meeting of the Académie Française, but the quarrel continued to simmer in the following years, before erupting once again in full force with Anne Dacier's 1711 *Iliade* and La Motte's 1714 *Discours sur Homère*.

16. "There are poetic genres, where not only do the ancient Romans not surpass us, but which they did not even know; such, for example, are those poems in prose that we call novels [*romans*], and of which we have examples that cannot be too greatly esteemed" ("[I]l y a des genres de poésie, où non seulement les Latins ne nous ont point surpassés; mais qu'ils n'ont pas même connus; comme par exemple, ces poèmes en prose que nous appelons *romans*, et dont nous avons chez nous des modèles qu'on ne saurait trop estimer"; *OC* 572). Likewise, Boileau happily applauds Corneille, who, with his poetics of admiration (rather than pathos), has "invented a new genre of tragedy, unknown to Aristotle"; indeed he goes so far as to laud the modern playwright for having "put himself above the rules of this philosopher" ("se mettant au-dessus des règles de ce philosophe"; 570).

17. For the concept of historical equity and the critique of modern vanity, see chapter 9 ("The Ancients Respond").

18. "Cléopâtre in *Rodogune* is very evil. [...] But her crimes are accompanied by a greatness of soul that has something so elevated, that at the same time that one detests her actions, one admires the source from which they spring" ("Cléopâtre dans *Rodogune* est très méchante [...]. Mais tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur d'âme, qui a quelque chose de si haut, qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions, on admire la source dont elles partent"; Corneille, *Discours [...] du poème dramatique*, *OC* 3.129).

Chapter 4: Antiquity without Authority

1. The terms quoted are from Levine (*Between* ix; *Autonomy* 136), who consistently presents the "defenders of the antiquity" as submitting to the "pedantic imitation of classical models" (*Autonomy* 153).

2. Cave's chapter in the *Cambridge History* nevertheless nuances such conflation of Ancients and authority (though they are numerous in the text) with a salutary warning against any "crude and simple equivalence between a programme of consecrated reading [of the ancients] and political authority" (425).

3. Descartes, according to his biographer Baillet, remarked, "We have no reason to so esteem the ancients on account of their antiquity. It is instead we who are the ancients, for the world is now older than in their time, and we have greater experience" ("Nous n'avons aucune raison pour tenir si grand compte aux anciens de leur Antiquité. C'est nous, bien plutôt, qui sommes les anciens, car le monde est plus vieux aujourd'hui que de leur temps, et nous avons une plus grande expérience"; *Vie de Descartes*, cited in Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne* 159).

Pascal handles the issue thus: "The respect we grant to antiquity is now at such a point [...] that one treats as oracles all its thoughts, and as potent mysteries all its obscurities. [...] All the generations of men, through the centuries, should be considered as one man who subsists forever and who continually learns; from this point of view, we see how unjust it is to respect antiquity in its philosophers. [...] Who cannot see that the old age of this universal man is not to be found in the time closest to its birth, but instead in the time furthest from it? Those that we call ancients were in reality new to all things and formed the infancy of mankind; and since we have added to their knowledge the experience of the centuries that followed them, it is in fact in us that we should find this antiquity that we revere in others" ("Le respect que l'on porte à l'antiquité étant aujourd'hui à tel point [...] que l'on se fait des oracles de toutes ses pensées, et des mystères même de ses obscurités. [...] Toute la

suite des hommes, pendant le cours de tant de siècles, doit être considérée comme un même homme qui subsiste toujours et qui apprend continuellement; d'où l'on voit avec combien d'injustice nous respectons l'Antiquité dans ses philosophes. [...] Qui ne voit que la vieillesse dans cet homme universel ne doit pas être cherchée dans les temps proches de sa naissance, mais dans ceux qui en sont les plus éloignés? Ceux que nous appelons anciens étaient véritablement nouveaux en toutes choses et formaient l'enfance des hommes proprement; et comme nous avons joint à leurs connaissances l'expérience des siècles qui les ont suivis, c'est en nous que l'on peut trouver cette antiquité que nous révérons dans les autres"; preface to the *Traité du vide*, in *OC* 529–34). Pascal's place in the preparation for the quarrel is fascinating, and he has been considered both as a key forerunner in the ideology of progress (even considered a forerunner of Fontenelle, for example, by Van Doren, *Idea of Progress* 35–39) and, conversely, as the perfect model for all future antimoderns who contest progress (Compagnon, *Les antimodernes* 8–9 and *passim*). In his ambiguity he presents, I believe, the very essence of the kind of Ancient partisan I am considering here: nuanced, wary of authority, but equally wary of the hegemony of rationalism in spheres beyond its legitimate empire. See also Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne* 158–61.

4. On the question of modern perfection and theories of decline, see DeJean, *Ancients* 17–18 and *passim*; Hartog, *Anciens* 200–206; Yilmaz, *Le temps moderne*; and my “‘Maturité’ et ‘puérilité.’”

5. See chapter 7 (“The Pagan Menace”).

6. In particular by Huet, *La Querelle*. See Gaillard, *Fables* 82–144; and Boch, *Les dieux désenchantés* 23–58.

7. “That is, [it] allow[s] no other principles or data for the interpretation of Scripture and study of its contents except those that can be gathered only from Scripture itself and from a historical study of Scripture” (Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise* 87).

8. See Niderst, *Fontenelle à la recherche* 218–21; and, more broadly, Dagen, “Fontenelle et Spinoza,” in Niderst, *Fontenelle* 379–95).

9. In one of the few sections in the *Parallèle* that treats secondary education (“les collèges”), Perrault’s spokesperson, the Abbé, asserts that if the Modern party ideas were put in practice, nothing would change: “one would continue to study just as one has done up to now” (“on continuerait à étudier comme on a fait jusqu’à cette heure”; 2:297).

10. See Saint Simon’s 1720 portrait of Anne Dacier as being “simple, unpretentious, witty, and pleasant in conversation, in which one would never suspect that she knew more than the most ordinary of women” (“simple, unie, avec de l’esprit, agréable dans la conversation, où on ne se serait pas douté qu’elle sût rien de plus que les femmes les plus ordinaires”; cited in Mazon, *Madame Dacier* 11). B. Guion has rightly demonstrated how the Modern party imported the codes of sociable politeness to rework the norms of literary polemics (“Une dispute”); the evidence here shows, though, that the Ancient party, working from a tradition dating to at least Pascal’s *Lettres provinciales*, did so as well.

11. Particularly by Swift. See Patey, “Ancients and Moderns” 48–51.

12. For Boileau’s embrace of the contemporary general public, see Moriarty, *Taste* 172–76. In this sense, both the Ancients and the Moderns are, as Luc Ferry asserted, “anti-traditionalist” parties. As he notes of Ancient apologists such as Boileau, “if the ancients triumph in their eyes over the moderns, it is not because of their antiquity, as would generally be assumed until the Renaissance and in keeping with a traditional intellectual framework that placed archetypal models in the past; but instead because they [the ancients]

incarnate an ideal" ("si les Anciens l'emportent à ses yeux sur les Modernes, ce n'est pas parce qu'ils sont anciens, comme on l'admettait jusqu'à la Renaissance conformément à un cadre de pensée traditionnel qui situait les archétypes dans le passé; mais c'est qu'ils incarnent un idéal"; *Le sens*, 47).

13. "It is not the approval of either veritable scholars or phony pedants to which great authors of antiquity owe their glory, but instead to the constant and unanimous admiration of sensible and sensitive men throughout the centuries" ("Ce n'est point à l'approbation des faux ni des vrais savants que les grands écrivains de l'Antiquité doivent leur gloire: mais à la constante et unanime admiration de ce qu'il y a eu dans tous les siècles d'hommes sensés et délicats"; "Letter to Perrault," in *OC* 571). Boileau's letter is rife with disdain for "ces ridicules admirateurs de l'Antiquité" of the kind who append neo-Latin suffixes to their names ("les savants en us"; 570, 571).

14. See Merlin-Kajman, *Public* 153–266.

15. I refer here to Habermas's reflection on the seventeenth-century "literary precursor of the public sphere" that "provided the training ground for a critical public reflection" (*Structural* 29). For the relevance of this paradigm to seventeenth-century literary debates, see Merlin-Kajman, *Public* 24–32, 153–93), and Stenzel, "Espace public."

16. See Niderst, "Les 'gens de Paris,'" in Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle à l'autre* 159–69; Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 350–60; and Fumaroli, "Les abeilles." As for Louis XIV himself, he largely refused to take sides in the quarrel. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that he leaned slightly toward the Modern position before the 1680s and toward the Ancient position later (see Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 358).

17. Censorship was reinforced in 1667 under the reorganized state police led by La Reynie. See Netz, *Histoire* 34–43; H.-J. Martin, *Livre* 267–89, 440–44, 461–66, 695–98; and Viala, *Naissance* 115–22.

18. See for example Anne Dacier's *L'Odyssée* (1:141) and Alexander Pope's various commentaries on the *nepenthes* potion (*Poems* 9:133).

19. Perrault's most outspoken Modern mouthpiece, the Chevalier, hazards thus: "if one examines closely the morals and behavior of these sorts of wise men, their beautiful precepts on love, their tenderness for young boys, and other little gallantries [...] but that is not the subject under discussion now" ("Si l'on épluchait de bien près les mœurs de ces sortes de sages, leurs beaux préceptes sur l'amour, leur tendresse pour les jeunes garçons, et cent autres menues galanteries [...] mais ce n'est pas de quoi il s'agit présentement"; *Parallèle* 2:110–11). Despite a few such allusions, "that" is regrettably never really the "subject under discussion."

Chapter 5: *Why the Scandal?*

1. Fénelon, letter to La Motte, May 4, 1714 (in Lecoq, *Querelle* 485). Italics mine.

2. The first by the Chevalier, the second by the Abbé (*Parallèle* 3:179, 49). The more cool-headed Abbé is often considered Perrault's most reliable mouthpiece, while the colorful Chevalier may let loose some excesses that Perrault's prudence would hesitate to call his own. Perrault himself claims in his preface to the second volume that he takes full responsibility for the Abbé's words, unlike the Chevalier's. In any case, both use the language of personal shock. I will sometimes refer here to the Abbé's commentaries as Perrault's

own, while generally referring to the Chevalier (especially in his more piquant remarks) by his name.

3. The Chevalier: “he rails against Anthony [and others] with filth [...] the ideas that he gives of them are sometimes so dirty and disgusting that if I had to speak to you about them, I would be ashamed to use the same expressions” (“ce sont les ordures qu’il dit contre Antoine [...], les idées qu’il en donne sont quelquefois si sales et si dégoûtantes, que si j’avais à vous en parler, j’aurais honte de me servir des mêmes expressions”; Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:196). “Ordures” is used elsewhere to refer to Catullus (3:3), to Greek epigrams (1:36), and to Horace, whose second satire is so “pleine d’ordures d’un bout à l’autre” that it is unspeakable (3:225).

4. See Seznec’s analysis of *anticomanie* in the eighteenth century, referring principally to a pedantic obsession with ancient erudition (*Essais sur Diderot*). It is, however, not so much dry scholarship as irrational admiration that Perrault and the Moderns target.

5. “[I]f they find obscure [...] passages, they regard them as the greatest efforts of the human mind and as divine things that the deep mysteries they contain and our own feeble intelligence render impenetrable” (“si on tombe sur des endroits obscurs [...], on les regarde comme les derniers efforts de l’esprit humain et comme des choses divines que la profondeur des mystères qu’elles renferment, et notre faiblesse nous rendent impénétrables”; Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:26).

6. “Ces sortes de beautés sont de tous les goûts, de tous les pays et de tous les temps. Il y a d’autres beautés qui ne sont qu’arbitraires, qui plaisent parce que les yeux s’y sont accoutumés” (Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:139).

7. Longepierre translated the *Idylles de Bion et de Moschus* in 1686, the *Idylles de Théocrite* in 1688. We enter here into one of the many episodes of the quarrel, this one concerning pastoral poetry, which notably helps fuel Fontenelle’s entry into the debate with his response to Longepierre in the *Traité sur la nature de l’épique* in 1688, to which he appended his *Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes*. See Niderst, *Fontenelle* 366–81, and Hepp, *Homère* 35. Theocritus will continue in the following decades to be a favorite whipping boy of the Moderns; for Terrasson, for example, Theocritus is both “inculte” and “indécent” (*Dissertation* 1:232).

8. This and the following quotes are from the unpaginated preface to the first volume of Perrault’s *Parallèle*.

9. See chapter 2 (“Asserting Modernity”), at n. 11.

10. Dacier, *L’Iliade* xxiii. For Dacier’s distinction, see also chapter 11 (“The Ineffable Effect”).

11. See Thirouin, *L’aveuglement salutaire*.

12. Furetière’s *Dictionnaire* offers this definition of “Politique”: “l’art de gouverner et policer les États pour y entretenir la sûreté, la tranquillité et l’honnêteté des mœurs.” Likewise, the disturbance of this order is the essence of “subversion,” defined here as “désordre dans un État.”

Chapter 6: Modernity & Monarchy

1. For Chateaubriand, the Revolution was “produite en partie par des gens de lettres qui, plus habitants de Rome et d’Athènes que de leur pays, ont cherché à ramener dans l’Europe

les mœurs antiques” (*Essai* 90). On ancients and political thought of the eighteenth century, see Hartog, *Anciens* 45–76.

2. On the survival of ancient heroic models of glory in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including in the quarrel, see Morrissey, *Napoléon* 6–13, 45–69, and *passim*.

3. On Perrault as a staunch defender of political orthodoxy, see D. J. Culpin in his introduction to Perrault’s *Les hommes illustres* xxviii–xxx). As to the basic conservatism of Perrault’s Modern vision, we need only turn to the conclusion of the second volume of the *Parallèle*, where his spokesperson assures us that if the Modern party wins, nothing will change (2:297), to which the most enthusiastic Modern partisan (the Chevalier) declares his absolute contentment with the *status quo*: “As for me, I am persuaded that it is good that things should continue to go as they are” (“Pour moi, je suis persuadé qu’il est bon, que les choses continuent à aller comme elles vont”; 2:300).

4. See chapter 7 (“The Pagan Menace”). As Howells points out, the Ancient party leader Boileau never went so far in his royal panegyrics as to praise the revocation (“La religion des ‘Chefs,’” in Duchêne and Donville, *D’un siècle* 55).

5. See Goubert, *Louis XIV* 79–97; Briggs, *Early Modern* 144–61; and Rule, “Administrative History” 95–109).

6. On witchcraft, see Briggs, *Early Modern* 201–5. Colbert and Louis XIV intervened to stop the persecution of witches in Rouen in 1670, and prohibited any further persecutions. In 1682 a royal ordinance went further and “treated witchcraft solely as a matter of fraud and imposture” (205). On judicial astronomy and alchemy, Perrault reports that the Petite Académie ordered “that all astronomers refuse to pursue judicial astrology and that chemists no longer seek the philosopher’s stone, these two things found to be frivolous and pernicious” (“que les astronomes ne s’appliqueraient point à l’astrologie judiciaire et que les chimistes ne travailleraient point à la pierre philosophale, ces deux choses ayant été trouvées très frivoles et très pernicieuses”; Perrault, *Mémoires* 48). See also Apostolidès, *Le roi* 39. Perrault’s and Colbert’s efforts were not entirely successful: Jacob has shown the continued attraction of alchemy through the late seventeenth century (*Strangers*, chapter 2).

7. The Louis XIV of the early personal reign “presented a kind of enlightened despot before the astonished eyes of the rest of Europe” (Le Roy Ladurie, *Ancien Régime* 128). See also Briggs, *Early Modern* 149, 160–61. As noted before, Louis XIV himself largely refused to take sides in the quarrel (see Ferrier-Caverivière, *L’image* 358).

8. The Académie was originally founded in 1648, but thoroughly reorganized and invigorated in its refoundation in 1663.

9. The Petite Académie was transformed into the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Médailles in 1701. After Colbert’s death, it took on a less modernizing role, before becoming something of a sanctuary for the Ancients in the eighteenth century. On the early years see P. Burke, *Fabrication* 58–59; Dandry, *Dictionnaire* 16–17; and Fumaroli, “Les abeilles” 181.

10. Even if one holds that the Dutch War (1678) presented the first post-apogee “turning point” for France, it was still quite possible for the French to indulge in a “sublime disregard for the facts” (Goubert, *Louis XIV* 130). The darker years of defeats and deficits at the end of Louis XIV’s reign were long unforeseeable for contemporaries. Nevertheless, as we have seen in chapter 4 (“Antiquity without Authority”), Perrault himself sometimes saw his own era as an apex threatened with eminent decline.

11. See Ferrier-Caverivière, *L’image* 351–73. While Ancients like Longepierre contin-

ued to invoke the prestige of antiquity to flatter Louis (*L'image* 360), Moderns, as early as Perrault's protector Desmarets de Saint Sorlin in 1674, vehemently claimed that Louis surpassed, indeed effaced, ancient models (*L'image* 355, 368–74).

12. The title *Louis le Grand* was apparently first used officially for a medal in 1671, and became standard usage in the following decade (see P. Burke, *Fabrication* 74, 78). Apostolidès comments: "les masques successifs d'Apollon, d'Alexandre, de Louis-Auguste, du Roi-Soleil ont [...] servi à préparer la figure de Louis le Grand" (*Le roi* 136).

13. While scholars of royal propaganda tend to agree on certain general principles, they wrangle over the precise dates of the modernizing movement. P. Burke places the shift in the late 1670s (*Fabrication* 131), while Apostolidès places it from 1669–75 (*Le roi*, 114–15).

14. For the "crisis in representation" see P. Burke, *Fabrication* 125–33). For the decline of *mythistoire*, see Apostolidès, *Le roi* 92).

15. Perrault's poem *La peinture* urges artists to abandon ancient references for a direct depiction of Louis's victories alone (101, 121–23). As for the Grande Galerie, in addition to the contemporary subject matter, the inscriptions for the murals were transformed in 1685 from Latin to French, a modernizing move that won great praise in the contemporary press (Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 375). Of course, traces of Greco-Roman prestige remain in the Grande Galerie pictorial program, notably in the somewhat discordant ancient dress worn by Louis in the scenes of his modern military triumphs. See also P. Burke, *Fabrication* 86; and Walton, *Versailles* 95.

16. On the Imprimerie Royale under Colbert, and its shift from ancient erudition to both scientific and propaganda publications, see H.-J. Martin (*Livre* 1:671–73). Martin notes the rare luxury of the propaganda volumes at a time in which the publishing industry was generally depressed (1:673).

17. See Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 354–57.

18. Cited in Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 356. On Desmarets's "fundamentalist modernism," see H. G. Hall, *Desmarets* 348–50, and Fumaroli, "Les abeilles."

19. See Couton's commentary in Molière, *OC* 2:446. On Molière and the fêtes, see Chartier, "George Dandin"; Van Elslande, "Molière" and "Du roi"; and my "Was Molière a Modern?"

20. See Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 376.

Chapter 7: The Pagan Menace

1. Scholars have long noted the religious aspects of the quarrel. From Rigault's 1856 *Histoire* onward, it has been argued that Christian theories of providential history were a key source for the idea of progress embraced by the Moderns (*Histoire* 1–26). On the Christian idea of human progress in late Renaissance, particularly in Jesuit thought, see Stegmann, *L'héroïsme* 2:279–334. Of course, this providential view coexists, if somewhat uneasily, with the Moderns' paradoxical celebration of intellectual and cultural progress within pre-Christian pagan antiquity, as examined in part 1. On the Christian tendencies of the Modern party, see also Soriano, *Les contes* 297–300; Bury, *Littérature* 157; Boch, *Les dieux* 110–11; and Dagen, "Du théologique au littéraire."

2. On Desmarets's career, see H. G. Hall, *Richelieu's Desmarets*, as well as P. Burke, *Fabrication* 75–79, 162; DeJean, *Ancients* 45–46, 53–54; and Fumaroli, "Les abeilles" 106–29).

3. The linguistic quarrel was opened by Louis Le Laboureur in his 1667 *Les Avantages de*

la langue française sur la langue latine. But it is Desmarets's publication in 1673 of his *Traité pour juger des poètes grecs, latins et français* (which repeats claims made three years earlier in his *La Comparaison de la langue et de la poésie françaises avec la grecque et la latine*) that unleashed a wide controversy that overtook even the Académie Française and the official organs of state propaganda (provoking, for example, debates over the language choice for royal inscriptions). See Gillot, *Querelle* 433–53, and Dandrey, *Dictionnaire* 41–45.

4. From Desmaret de Saint-Sorlin's "Discours pour prouver que les sujets chrétiens sont les seuls propres à la poésie héroïque" in the 1673 edition of *Clovis* (719).

5. Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *Défense de la poésie et de la langue françaises*, 1675: "Come fight with me this rebel troupe / This band of enemies, who, weak and mutinous, / Prefer Roman works to our own songs. / Let us suffer no longer their unjust audacity, / Which aims to lift Augustus above the Great Louis" ("Viens combattre avec moi cette troupe rebelle, / Ce ramas d'ennemis, qui, faibles et mutins, / Préfèrent à nos chants les ouvrages latins, / Ne souffrons point l'excès de leur audace injuste, / Qui sur le grand Louis veut élever Auguste"; Dandrey, *Dictionnaire* 41). On the superiority of Louis over ancient heroes, see also Desmarets's *Au roi, sur la prise de Maastricht* (1673) and *Au roi, sur sa seconde conquête de Franche-Comté* (1674).

6. Desmarets, *Épître au roi*, in *Clovis* 706–7. See Fumaroli's reading of this passage, in "Les abeilles" 126–27.

7. For a reading of the idol-breaking scene in Corneille's play and its relation to Roman antiquity and French modernity, see Lyons, *Tragedy* 109–37.

8. *Standard of Taste* 23. It must be noted that Hume also cites here as an example of the modern intolerance of paganism the work of an Ancient apologist, Racine's *Athalie*. This is typical of the historical movement (already seen, for example, in Chénier's critique of Boileau), through which even the Ancient partisans of the late seventeenth century are later viewed as too Modern for their own good and as not faithful enough to the otherness of antiquity.

9. A year before his death Desmarets asks in 1675 that Charles Perrault take up his polemical battle: "Viens défendre, Perrault, la France qui t'appelle" (*Défense de la poésie et de la langue françaises* [Dandrey, *Dictionnaire* 41]). See DeJean, *Ancients* 161–62; Fumaroli, "Les abeilles" 128; and Rigault, *Histoire* 113.

10. See Bury, *Littérature* 157.

11. "Knowing the true source of his own great power, / He uses it, full of zeal and gratitude, / To bring back to their pasture the lost herds / That a mortal error had led astray, / And the defeat of heresy by his pious cares / Awards his virtues with an immortal trophy" ("Instruit d'où vient en lui cet excès de puissance, / Il s'en sert plein de zèle et de reconnaissance, / A rendre à leur bercail les troupeaux égarés / Qu'une mortelle erreur en avait séparés, / Et par ses pieux soins l'hérésie étouffée / Fournit à ses vertus un immortel trophée"; Perrault, "Le Siècle" in *La querelle* 272–73). Perrault here echoes closely Desmarets's panegyrics concerning the suppression of Protestantism, which also feature the euphemism of reuniting "les troupeaux séparés" ("Épître au roi," in *Clovis* 715).

12. Fontenelle is explicit on this point, denouncing "this kind of religion that one has made of adoring antiquity" ("cette espèce de religion que l'on s'est faite d'adorer l'Antiquité"; *Discours sur . . . l'élogue*, in *OC* 2:409).

13. See Soriano, *Les contes* 297–300. Soriano remarks that after this attempt at a Christian epic, Perrault subdues somewhat his Christian fervor during the following quarrel (308).

14. On the absurdities of the myth of Orpheus, Perrault writes: “La Grèce toujours vaine est encor [*sic*] sur ce point / Fabuleuse à l’excès et ne se dément point” (*Le siècle* 267–68).

15. At times Perrault echoes Desmarets perfectly: “It is astonishing that intelligent people can be persuaded [...] that the myths invented by the Greeks are the essence of poetry” (“Il est étonnant que des gens d’esprit soient persuadés [...] que les fables inventées par les Grecs soient de l’essence de la poésie”; *Pensées* no. 67, p. 87). At other times, he takes a more nuanced view of progress, suggesting that mythological marvels should keep up with the times, just like technology: “To say that one cannot create good poetry without using Greek myths is like saying that one cannot wage war without battering rams and catapults, and that one cannot eat, as was the ancient custom, without consulting the stars” (“Dire qu’on ne peut faire de bonne poésie sans y mêler les fables grecques c’est comme si l’on disait qu’on ne saurait faire la guerre sans béliers et sans catapultes et qu’on ne peut manger sans consulter les astres comme on faisait autrefois”; no. 68, p. 87). The comparison with the anachronistic superstition of astrology nevertheless situates the critique within the unbending universals of a Christian rationalist outlook.

16. “the mythological tales [...] of the ancients were created only to please without any attention to good morals, which they much neglected” (“des fables [...] des anciens n’ont été faites que pour plaire sans égard aux bonnes mœurs qu’ils négligeaient beaucoup”), claims Perrault, while his own tales will follow “the law which I have imposed upon myself to write nothing which might offend either modesty or decorum” (“la loi que je me suis imposée de ne rien écrire qui pût blesser ou la pudeur ou la bienséance”; *Contes* 5, 7). See Escola, *Contes* 15–48, 116–30; and Sermain, *Le conte* 33–42, 115–40.

17. Fontenelle makes the same argument in *De l’origine des fables*, asserting that modern Christians have progressed beyond the irrationality of mythological thinking “because we are more enlightened by the true religion and, according to my beliefs, by some rays of true philosophy” (“parce que nous sommes éclairés des lumières de la vraie religion, et à ce que je crois, de quelques rayons de la vraie philosophie”; 29).

18. Myths were created “in an ignorant century, where the freedom to compose mythological tales with impunity went hand in hand with the general inclination the Greeks had in this regard” (“dans un siècle ignorant, où la licence d’écrire impunément des fables, se joignait encore à l’inclination générale qui y porte les Grecs”; Fontenelle, *Histoire* 43).

19. For example, Fontenelle’s *De l’origine des fables* is the opening text of Feldman’s and Richardson’s anthology *The Rise of Modern Mythology* (2, 7–10).

20. This critical approach also opened important avenues for eighteenth-century scholars of pagan mythology such as Nicolas Fréret, Antoine Banier, and Charles Dupuis.

21. It is language, that essential tool of the scientist, that is to blame: “Dès lors que l’on se met à soupçonner que le garant de la rationalité nouvelle parle dans la mythologie le langage typique d’un ‘esprit frappé temporairement de démence,’ le scandale éclate” (Détienne, *L’invention* 28).

22. See Niderst, *Fontenelle* 287.

Chapter 8: Morality & Sociability

1. La Motte, like most critics of the time, does not recognize any significant chronological distance between the time of Homer and that of the Trojan war; the two operate in the same moral and intellectual framework.

2. Speaking of Achilles, Perrault remarks, "What need had [Homer] of giving so many bad qualities to his hero? [...] I find it inexcusable for Homer to have exaggerated, without any justification, the evil of this character" ("Quelle nécessité y avait-il de donner tant de mauvaises qualités à son héros? [...] Je trouve Homère inexcusable dans ce caractère qu'il a outré en mal, sans aucun besoin"; *Parallèle* 3:50).

3. The notion that virtue arises from "the sole light of reason" ("la seule lumière de [l]a raison") is a key argument of La Mothe Le Vayer's *De la vertu des païens*, with its praise of "those first men who had only recently left the hands of their Creator [and who] were virtuous in a completely different way than those who have come since, and who have received these first seeds of probity only after much alteration [through time]" ("ces premiers hommes qui venaient presque de sortir des mains de leur Créateur, [et qui] étaient tout autrement vertueux que ceux qui ont vécu depuis et qui n'ont reçu cette première semence de probité qu'après beaucoup d'altération"; 30, 14).

4. Also: "It will be seen that [the ancients] were not only ignorant of morality in its details, but also that they were ignorant of its basic principles; in contrast, we can say that morality lacks nothing today" ("on verra que [les anciens] n'ont pas moins ignoré la morale en détail, qu'ils l'ont ignorée en gros et dans ses principes, au lieu qu'on peut dire qu'il ne manque rien à celle d'aujourd'hui"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 4:147).

5. The consequences of this debunking for the role of the poet will be examined in part 3.

6. La Motte further criticizes Aristotle in his *Réflexions sur la critique* (in *Textes critiques* 319). Here La Motte follows Perrault, who indicts Aristotle's *Poetics* for yoking critical reason to slavish respect for the *Iliad* (*Parallèle* 3:276); Perrault himself was no doubt indebted to d'Aubignac (see Aubignac, *Conjectures* 31). Terrasson likewise blasts Aristotle for his prejudice in favor of Homer (*Dissertation* 1:268).

7. Gordon forcefully attacked Elias's focus on the court in the new ethics of sociability, grounding it instead in the bourgeoisie of Paris and the provinces, a position largely also adopted by Le Roy Ladurie in *Saint-Simon* 515–20 and by Fumaroli in "La conversation." See also Goodman, *Republic*.

8. Perrault devotes numerous pages to the shocking coarseness of the Homeric world, so similar to that of today's "peasants" ("nos paysans"; *Parallèle* 3:74). In addition to the already cited scandals of princes cooking their own food and princesses laundering their own clothes, he catalogues such signs of rusticity as their hitching up of mules without the aid of stable boys, their slaughtering of cows by their own hands, their lack of proper bed linen, and their tiny gardens and humble palaces; even Penelope's domestic chore of spinning, shrewd ploy that it may be, is mocked (3:73–81). The Chevalier can only exclaim: "What poverty! What misery everywhere!" ("Quelle pauvreté! Quelle misère en toutes façons!"; 3:75). La Motte reprises many of these examples of crudeness, proclaiming himself to be "pained" ("blessé") at seeing Achilles depicted "performing the tasks of a cook" ("dans les fonctions d'un cuisinier"; *Discours* 53–54). The Moderns are indebted here to Julius Caesar Scaliger's earlier attacks against "the lowlife tenor of the *Odyssey*," as Edith Hall termed the class anxieties aroused by Homer (*Return* 131).

9. Hume's Francophilia granted him great familiarity with the French side of the quarrel, as his references to Fontenelle, Perrault, Boileau, and Racine demonstrate. For the influence of the *querelle* on Hume, see Peter Jones, *Hume's Sentiment* 93–104.

10. For the seventeenth-century interest in a certain *antiquité galante*, see Denis, *Parnasse* 289–304, and Viala, *France galante* 59–65, 247.

11. Some examples from Perrault's *Parallèle*: "We have already mentioned the lack of politeness found in the ungallant manner with which the Greeks and Romans treated love" ("Nous avons déjà remarqué en passant le manque de politesse des Grecs et des Romains dans les manières peu galantes, dont il traitaient l'amour"; 2:282); "this gallantry of which we speak was unknown to all ancient authors" ("cette galanterie dont nous parlons était inconnue à tous les auteurs anciens"; 3:289); "a certain gallantry that was not yet in use among the ancients" ("une certaine galanterie qui n'était point encore en usage chez les anciens"; 3:189).

12. "Shepherds must have wit, and it must be a refined and gallant wit; without that they will not please" ("Il faut que les bergers aient de l'esprit, et de l'esprit fin et galant; ils ne plairaient pas sans cela"; Fontenelle, *OC* 2:402); as for the ancient shepherds found in Theocritus, Fontenelle remarks: "de leurs temps le monde n'avait pas encore eu le loisir de se polir" (2:385).

13. Although Perrault's Abbé warns at one point that a dissolute abuse of *galanterie* can be "dangerous" (*Parallèle* 2:34), he in general represents it as a moral code superior to all previous ones.

14. It is certainly no accident that Molière's work was so often cited in the quarrel, even though it officially broke out after his death. The period of Molière's Parisian career saw the great heralding of gallant sociability, as well as the sharply negative reaction to it from such figures as Boileau, Racine, and Saint-Evremond. As for the period of the quarrel itself, the Modern party sought to align Molière with its cause, repeatedly claiming him as an example of modern French superiority over Latin forerunners (see, e.g., *Parallèle* 3:210). Yet the Moderns understood quite well they were on shaky ground. Even while praising Molière in the fallout from the "Querelle d'*Alceste*," Charles Perrault's brother Pierre had to admit that the playwright not only imitated and admired Plautus and Terence but was considered in his time a decided *opponent* of the Modern cause, even a member of the dreaded Ancient party conspiracy, the "Caballe" (in Perrault, *Critique* 148–49). See M. Call "The Battle," and my "Was Molière a Modern?" On Molière's approach to gallantry, see Habib, *Galanterie* 202–17, and Viala, *France galante* 66–71, 84–90, 97–103.

15. Perrault's Chevalier comments: "You'll notice that it is a misanthrope who speaks here, that is, a man who affects to be of an opinion contrary to everyone else. If Molière wanted to speak his own mind, he would have found a different way to express himself" ("Vous remarquerez que c'est un misanthrope qui parle, c'est-à-dire, un homme qui affecte d'être d'un sentiment contraire à tous les autres. Si Molière avait parlé de son chef il se serait expliqué autrement"; *Parallèle* 3:288).

16. Molière's *Le malade imaginaire* was originally intended for the 1672 fêtes, but due to the infamous rivalry with Lully it was not performed at court until the 1674 fêtes.

17. In *Le malade imaginaire*, Molière certainly appears to make Diafoirus a caricature of an "Ancient" apologist (though not the real thing). Argan boasts that Diafoirus "parle bien latin et grec," to Angélique's modern disdain (act 1, sc. 5, in Molière, *OC* 2:1106); Diafoirus's father likewise brags that his son "blindly follows the opinions of our ancients" ("s'attache aveuglément aux opinions de nos anciens"; act 2, sc. 5, in *OC* 2:1134).

18. Viala takes a similar position, in *France galante* 248–49.

19. Stuurman presents a nuanced study of the complexities of feminism in the quarrel, in *Poulain de la Barre* 195–210.

20. “Que chez elles se prend la fine politesse, / Le bon air, le bon goût et la délicatesse” (Perrault, *Apologie des femmes* 7).

21. Perrault’s ally Fontenelle presents a more fundamentally egalitarian feminism (somewhat in line with Poulain de la Barre) in his preface to the *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, a work dedicated to educating cultivated amateurs of both sexes in the science of astronomy. Yet while Fontenelle stresses that women are equally capable of scientific understanding, the work also employs a consciously gendered gallantry to appeal to women readers and their vivacious “imagination.” The opening epistle bragging of the “acquisition” to the “parti de la philosophie” of a woman “prized” above all for her “beauty and youth” typifies this strain of Fontenelle’s traditional approach (*OC* 2:15).

22. “une vertu si belle, si séante au beau sexe” (Perrault, *Contes* 46). For paternalism, see p. 34; for “soumission,” p. 40. On the conservatism of Perrault’s feminine morality, see Soriano, *Les contes* 314.

23. “le spectacle de ces [...] yeux crevés [...] ferait soulever la délicatesse de nos dames qui composent la plus belle partie de notre auditoire, et dont le dégoût attire aisément la censure de ceux qui les accompagnent” (Corneille, *OC* 3:18–19).

24. Boileau, in his response to Perrault, denies having “dit des mots sales” (*OC* 574); Antoine Arnauld’s letter to Perrault defending Boileau includes a striking theoretical reflection on “obscénité” “dans les mots et dans les choses” (Boileau *OC* 576–77).

25. Abramovici shows how the Moderns frequently used accusations of obscenity against the Ancients (*Obscénité* 51–65). He also notes the parallel between antiquity and the lower classes (as well as foreigners) in this domain: “Branded by the mark of the obscene, the populace becomes even more *other*, as foreign to the modern sensibility of classicism as had become, in the seventeenth century, pagan antiquity and the licentious Middle Ages” (“Marqué du signe de l’obscène, le peuple n’en devint que plus *autre*, aussi étranger à la sensibilité moderne du Classicisme que l’étaient devenus, au cours du XVII^e siècle, l’Antiquité païenne ou le Moyen Age grivois”; 64). For seventeenth-century discourses on obscenity before the quarrel, see also DeJean, *Reinvention*.

Chapter 9: *The Ancients Respond*

1. “Injustice aveugle et pernicieuse, qui ne voit pas que la règle qu’elle établit dans la passion de s’élever soi-même au-dessus de tout, en élevant son siècle au-dessus des autres; que cette règle, dis-je, servira un jour à condamner ceux qui l’emploient” (Longepierre, *Discours* 98).

2. Longepierre draws here on some earlier reflections by defenders of the foreignness of antiquity. Saint-Evremond, as noted, had two decades earlier crafted a discourse on the collective narcissism of modern France, though not yet fully developing the comparison to individual *amour-propre*. In the *Dissertation sur le Grand Alexandre* he writes: “One of the great failings of our Nation is to compare everything to ourselves, going so far as to label as foreigners, even when they are in their native country, all of those who do not have our appearance or manners. That is why we are justly reproached for not knowing how to value things except by the relationship that they have with us” (“Un des grands défauts de notre nation, c’est de ramener tout à elle, jusqu’à nommer étrangers dans leurs propres pays, ceux

qui n'ont pas bien, ou son air, ou ses manières. De là vient qu'on nous reproche justement de ne savoir estimer les choses, que par le rapport qu'elles ont avec nous"; *Œuvres* 2:89–90).

3. Boivin asserts that every age, in its self-satisfied lack of curiosity, falls victim to this kind of chauvinism: "M. de La Motte always supposes that Homer's time was a crude one. There has never been an age in history that did not believe itself enlightened, and more enlightened than any other age. Such a good opinion of oneself is the usual result of ignorance" ("M. D. L[a] M[otte] suppose toujours que le siècle d'Homère était grossier. Il n'y a jamais eu de siècle qui ne se soit cru éclairé, et plus éclairé qu'aucun autre. La bonne opinion de soi-même est l'effet ordinaire de l'ignorance"; *Apologie* 193).

4. Dacier goes further in her embrace of the East, frankly preferring it as the source of all invention, which the West can only attempt to copy in a dull manner: "There are nations so happily situated, and which the sun looks upon so favorably, that they are capable of creating and inventing everything by themselves and of arriving at perfection; and [...] there are others that, smothered in a duller and heavier climate, can only, by means of imitation, raise themselves above the crudeness and the barbarity to which their birth has doomed them. And these latter countries are all the Western nations in comparison to those that are in the East." ("Il y a des nations si heureusement situées et que le soleil regarde si favorablement, qu'elles ont été capables d'imaginer et d'inventer elles-mêmes, et d'arriver à la perfection; et [...] il y en a d'autres qui, ensevelies dans un air plus épais, n'ont jamais pu, que par le secours de l'imitation, se tirer de la grossièreté et de la barbarie où leur naissance les a plongées. Et telles sont toutes les Nations Occidentales par comparaison à celles qui sont à l'Orient"; *Des causes* 18–19).

5. F. Escal dates the beginning of the composition to around 1666. A version, not authorized by Boileau, was first published in 1688. Boileau published his own version of the text in 1713 (*OC* 1089–90).

6. Scudéry is a key target for Boileau's satiric bile; aside from her practice of the novel, she later allied herself with the nascent Modern party, remarking for example that if Louis XIV had been Homer's hero, "the *Iliad* would be the better for it" ("l'*Iliade* en serait plus belle"; *Mercure Galant* [June 1686], cited by M. Vincent in Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle* 182). As for Quinault, his role in the prequel to the quarrel, the polemic over his 1674 libretto for *Alceste*, has already been noted.

7. It is hard to argue with Terrasson's portrait of a Boileau who devotes most of his Ancient partisan career fighting for purely secular literary values, before converting in his later years to a pious moralism (*Dissertation* 1:247).

8. See chapter 4 ("Antiquity without Authority").

9. See Gombrich, *Preference* 86.

10. The Moderns, on the other hand, generally held in contempt theories of cultural difference resulting from diverse climates. See, for example, Terrasson's response to Anne Dacier's above-noted celebration of the sunny East: "I am convinced that differences in climate never alter basic character" ("Je suis persuadé que la différence des climats ne touche jamais au fond de l'esprit"; *Dissertation* 1:liii).

11. La Fontaine, in his *Épître à Huet*, *OC* 2:647–49. See Ferrier-Caverivière, *L'image* 362–63; for La Fontaine's troubled relation with the regime, see Fumaroli, *Le poète*.

12. Of Perrault's claim that Louis XIV's personal qualities lift his entire century above all others, Longepierre writes, "that is pushing zeal too far; and the admiration for the many virtues [of Louis XIV] should not lead us to commit injustices" ("c'est pousser le zèle trop

loin; et l'admiration de tant de vertus [de Louis XIV] ne doit point nous faire commettre d'injustice" (*Discours* 200). Longepierre likewise affirms that Louis is too shrewd to fall into the "trap" ("piège") of base flattery (188). Terrasson will later respond that the Ancients flattered the king as often as did the Moderns—only the Moderns did so with the politically virtuous aim of encouraging through encomium the monarch's peaceful domestic policies (*Dissertation* 1:238–39).

13. Following Dacier's more forceful comments, Fénelon will in his 1714 "Lettre à l'Académie" aim his arrows more directly at the current age, and pursue the Ancient party's attack against the collective narcissism of modernity: "Nothing defines a spoiled nation more than this scornful luxury that rejects ancient frugality. [...] It is our mad and cruel vanity, not the noble simplicity of the ancients, that needs be corrected" ("Rien ne marque tant une nation gâtée que ce luxe dédaigneux, qui rejette la frugalité des anciens. [...] C'est notre folle et cruelle vanité, et non pas la noble simplicité des anciens, qu'il faut corriger"; *Œuvres* 2:1195–96). For Fénelon's appropriation of ancient republicanism and its impact on Enlightenment thought, see D. Edelstein (*Terror* 57–62). It should be noted that this respect for Greek republicanism is not strictly limited to the self-declared defenders of pagan antiquity, but could also be vividly expressed by more orthodox thinkers such as Bossuet, who in his *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681) is full of admiration for the ancient Greek "amour de la liberté" and the "civil" and "sociable" society it created (part 3, chapter 5, pp. 484–88).

14. See Y. Coirault on Dacier, Saint-Simon, and liberal reactionaries, in Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle* 310–12.

15. "En un mot Homère avait à représenter un Ajax et un Hector, non un courtisan de Versailles ou de Saint-James" (Voltaire, chapter 2 of the *Essai sur la poésie épique*, in *English Essays* 415–16).

16. See Huet's 1680 *Demonstratio evangelica*, where he posits Moses as the originating figure (imperfectly disseminated) for all world religions. Thomassin also develops extensive parallels between the Homeric and Mosaic universes in the second book of his *Méthode* (see Gaillard, *Fables* 17–18, 91–97). Yet both these works are theological and exegetical, not intended primarily as entries into the yet brewing quarrel on the relation between ancient and modern secular literatures. Indeed, Huet's 1670 *Traité de l'origine des romans*, whose literary analysis touches more closely upon the key issues of the quarrel, avoids such explicit parallels between pagan and Judeo-Christian beliefs (on this distinction, see Gaillard, *Fables* 97–99).

17. "Soyez vif et pressé dans vos narrations" (Boileau, *OC* 175).

18. "Without all these [allegorical] ornaments, verses fall into languor; / Poetry is dead or crawls with no vigor" ("Sans tous ces ornements le vers tombe en langueur, / La poésie est morte, ou rampe sans vigueur"; Boileau, *OC* 173).

19. *Pace* Gaillard, who assumes Minerva's prudence to be a Christian virtue, and thus (mistakenly, to my mind) aligns Boileau with Christian allegorizing on this thin evidence—and in opposition to his own stated distaste for mixing secular and religious matters in poetry (*Fables* 116).

20. Boivin's fellow Ancient partisan Hardouin, in his 1716 *Apologie d'Homère*, takes a very similar position concerning the fundamental distance between pagan myth and Judeo-Christian theology. This provokes an intramural fight among the Ancients when Dacier, increasingly sidelined on the issue of Homer's theological value, responds with yet another

defense of her comparativist and allegorizing position (*Homère défendu*). It is yet another case in which Dacier reveals herself out of step with the Ancient party strategy of fully opposing “remote” antiquity to modern notions of truth, morality, or taste.

21. The success of Boivin’s argument can be attested in Montesquieu’s later refutation of La Motte in defense of the ancients: “Homer was a theologian only as needed to be a poet” (“Homère n’a été théologien que pour être poète”; *OC* 1:1019).

Chapter 10: Philosophy’s Turn

1. La Motte’s “Discours préliminaire” to his “Discours sur la tragédie à l’occasion des Macchabées” offers his perhaps most nuanced concessions to the vagaries of the poet’s personal “experience” and the nonrational “fire” of imagination (*Textes critiques* 533–35).

2. “Cet âge fut celui de la prose. [...] Ainsi la poésie mourut; ou du moins elle sembla mourir. Toute pénétrée d’intelligence, mécanique et sèche, elle perdit sa raison d’être. [...] A]près la mort de La Fontaine, il n’y eut plus de poètes en France” (Hazard, *La crise* 317–18). Hazard works from a conceptual framework shared by the modern founders of French literary history and of the historiography of aesthetics: the early Lanson and Croce. For Lanson, in his 1895 “La littérature et la science,” “la psychologie littéraire, en effet, est exclusive de tout esprit et toute méthode scientifique” (*Essais* 121); for Croce in his 1913 *Breviario di estetica*, “poetry and mathematics [...] seem to go together as little as fire and water. The *esprit mathématique* and the *esprit scientifique* are the most avowed enemies of the *esprit poétique*. The periods in which natural sciences and mathematics prevail (for example, the intellectualistic eighteenth century) are the most sterile for poetry” (*Guide to Aesthetics* 17). The Enlightenment death of French poetry has, of course, been amply contested in recent decades, beginning with Sylvain Menant’s 1981 study, *La chute d’Icare*. For a survey on the rebirth of scholarship on eighteenth-century French poetry, see Davies’s aptly titled “Poetry Reborn.”

3. Pascal, “De l’esprit géométrique,” in *OC* 592–95.

4. “I cannot judge the same thing exactly the same way twice. I cannot judge my writing while composing it. I must do as painters do, and I must step back, but not too far. How far? Just try and guess!” (“Je ne saurais juger d’une même chose exactement de même. Je ne puis juger de mon ouvrage en le faisant; il faut que je fasse comme les peintres, et que je m’en éloigne; mais non pas trop. De combien donc? Devinez!”; Pascal, *Pensées*, Br. no. 114). See Borgerhoff’s beautiful reading of Pascal’s aesthetics (*Freedom* 111–30).

5. Racine: “The principal rule is to please and to move” (“La principale règle est de plaire et de toucher” (the 1671 preface to *Bérénice*, in *OC* 1:452). Molière: “I’d like to know if the great rule of all the rules is not simply to please” (“Je voudrais bien savoir si la grande règle de toutes les règles n’est pas de plaire”; *La critique de l’École des femmes* [1663], in *OC I*, 663).

6. “Et enfin l’entente qui paraît dans la juste distribution des ombres et des lumières dans la dégradation des figures selon leur plan et dans le bel ordre d’une composition judicieusement ordonnée, plaît à la raison, et lui fait ressentir une joie moins vive à la vérité, mais plus spirituelle et plus digne d’un homme” (Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:213–14). For an important precursor to Perrault’s view of the visual arts, see André Félibien’s preface to the *Conférences de l’Académie*, which equally posits the overall “économie” of design as the highest aspiration of art, and as that which distinguishes it from the merely mechanical (49).

7. "Pour la belle constitution et la belle économie de la fable, comme je n'y en vois point, je ne puis lui donner de louange" (Perrault, *Parallèle* 3:46).

8. See chapter 4 ("Antiquity without Authority"). D'Aubignac's treatise makes for an interesting subplot in the quarrel. Perrault is not entirely ready to give up on Homer's authorship; he weakly affirms that the poet wrote all the songs of the *Iliad* but did so in embarrassingly haphazard order. Nevertheless, d'Aubignac's treatise provides much ammunition for Perrault, and to reinforce his precursor's brutal critique of Homer, Perrault attempts to accentuate its authority by multiplying its sources: "*Many excellent critics* claim that there was never a man in the world named Homer" ("Beaucoup d'excellents critiques soutiennent qu'il n'y a jamais eu au monde un homme nommé Homère"; 3:32–33, italics mine). Boileau, in his later response to the *Parallèle*, gleefully exposed Perrault's exaggeration. "All these excellent critics can be reduced to one, the late Monsieur l'abbé d'Aubignac" ("Tous ces excellents critiques donc se réduisent à feu Monsieur l'abbé d'Aubignac"; *Réflexions critiques*, in *OC* 498). However, having reduced Perrault's authoritative sources to a single author, Boileau had to recognize it was a prestigious one, for d'Aubignac's *Pratique du théâtre* inspired great respect. Boileau resolved the problem by arguing that the author of the *Pratique* was no longer himself when he wrote the *Conjectures*. Put simply, the *Conjectures* are the work of a senile critic. This "man of great merit [...], very adroit in matters of poetics [...], had fallen into a second childhood" "[Cet] homme de beaucoup de mérite [...], fort habile en matière de poétique [...], était tombé en une espèce d'enfance" (*Réflexions*, in *OC* 499). Boileau's dart stuck, and twenty years later, when the *Conjectures* were finally published in 1715, the editor, Boscheron, devoted considerable effort to establishing not only that d'Aubignac was the author, but also that the work was composed before the aged abbé descended into senility. On the aesthetic consequences of d'Aubignac's rejection of a single Homer, see Rabau, "L'Auctofiction," and Vialet, "Cohérence."

9. By classical standards, the work of different writers collected together can never be considered to have achieved any praiseworthy economy. Rhapsody is thus a term of disdain. See for example, the definition of *rapsodie* in Furetière's 1690 *Dictionnaire*: "quand on veut mépriser l'ouvrage d'un auteur, on dit que ce n'est qu'une rapsodie, qu'il n'y a rien de son invention."

10. "Neither you, nor I, nor anyone else in the world, is in a state to judge well any Greek or Latin author" as concerns linguistic beauty ("[ni] vous, ni moi, ni qui que ce soit au monde, n'est en état de bien juger d'aucun auteur grec ni latin"; *Parallèle* 2:18). Perrault elaborates at length on this point (2:4–27).

11. In Britain, for example, the modern was associated largely with the French absolutist court. See Scodel, "Seventeenth-Century English Literary Criticism" 553.

12. "As the French have no less a natural penchant to scorn the works of their own country than the Italians have to always accentuate the worth of those of their own countrymen" ("Comme les Français ne sont pas moins portés naturellement à mépriser les ouvrages de leur pays, que les Italiens sont soigneux de relever à toute rencontre le mérite de ceux de leurs compatriotes"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:221–22).

13. For the interrelation of tourism, antiquity and exoticism in the eighteenth century, see Redford, *Dilettanti*. As the eighteenth century progresses, the lure of travel turns increasingly east toward Greece and Asia Minor.

14. "Car je remarque que ces grands tableaux de Monsieur le Brun se peignent et s'embellissent tous les jours, et que le temps en y adoucissant ce que le pinceau judicieux

lui a donné pour être adouci et pour amuser son activité, qui sans cela s'attaquerait à la substance de l'ouvrage, y ajoute mille nouvelles grâces, qu'il n'y a que lui seul qui puisse donner" (Perrault, *Parallèle* 1:235–36).

15. "As concerns the meaning of a discourse, the thoughts that it contains, the figures that embellish it, the organization of its reasoning, and the economy of the work as a whole, in a word, all that constitutes the strength of eloquence, all these things can be seen better and can be felt better in an excellent translation than in the original" ("Pour ce qui est du sens du discours, des pensées qu'il renferme, des figures dont il est orné, de la suite du raisonnement, et de l'économie de l'ouvrage, en un mot de ce qui forme le corps de l'éloquence, toutes ces choses se voient mieux et se font mieux sentir dans une excellente traduction que dans l'original"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 2:10).

16. From one of Perrault's last works, his *Pensées chrétiennes*, no. 83, p. 93. La Motte equally mocks the obscurity of ancient languages, whose ambiguities and "confusion" lead to commentators' foolish admiration (*Discours* 105–6); he thus echoes Perrault in lauding French translations, which he considers at least equal to the originals, and praises modern French for its greater exactitude, and its proper subjugating of mere sound to rational sense (112–18).

17. On the superiority of the French language, see *Parallèle* (4:4–10).

18. Perrault returns to the theme of Ancient apologist as indulgent "mothers" in *Parallèle* 2:16.

19. Lyons points out that the Ancient party's supposed nostalgia for the past is an ironic one, defined by a self-conscious awareness of the impossibility of recapturing a past so irremediably distant from the present ("The Ancients' Ironic Nostalgia").

20. "Ce ne sera que dans les matières sérieuses, celles du poème épique, par exemple, que l'on pourra trouver cette puérilité mal placée" (Fontenelle, *OC* 5:560–61).

21. Perrault makes clear as early as 1674 that modern adaptations of classics must update all manners and morals to meet (higher) contemporary standards: "You might have remarked that when I praised our author [Quinault] for not imitating Euripides in several passages, it was not because I found those original passages absolutely bad; but because they do not conform to the morals and manners of our age. So, however good or divine the sentiments of Euripides are for his time, the critics have no reason to blame our author for not using them in his play, because it is not enough that things be good in themselves; they must appropriately fit the place, the time, and the people." ("Vous avez pu remarquer que quand j'ai loué notre auteur de n'avoir pas imité Euripide en plusieurs endroits, ce n'a pas été parce que je trouve ces endroits-là absolument mauvais; mais parce qu'ils ne sont pas conformes aux mœurs de notre siècle. Ainsi, quelque bons et quelque divins que soient les sentiments d'Euripide, par rapport aux mœurs de son temps, les critiques ont eu peu de raison de blâmer notre auteur de ne les avoir pas employés dans sa pièce, parce qu'il ne suffit pas que les choses soient bonnes en elles-mêmes; il faut qu'elles conviennent aux lieux, au temps, et aux personnes"; *Critique* 97).

22. "Les caractères qu'ils [Chapelain, Desmarets] donnent à leurs héros sont louables et héroïques; au lieu que le caractère qu'Homère donne à Achille est blâmable, le faisant injuste, impie, et plein de cruauté" (Perrault, *Parallèle* 3:147).

23. La Bruyère, for example, is clear in linking Cornelian admiration with moral exemplarity: in his tragedies, there is more "de ce que l'on admire, ou de ce que l'on doit imiter." Fumaroli has largely embraced the moral reading of a Jesuit dramaturgy of exemplarity in

Corneille's theater (*Héros et orateurs*), while Forestier argues for a Cornelian coexistence of admiration and ethically ambiguous tragic pathos (*Essai* 102–9).

24. Perrault echoes Augustus's line in *Cinna*, "Je suis maître de moi comme de l'univers" (act 5, sc. 3), at least four times in describing Alcide's magnanimity: "il doit aussi se surmonter lui-même et ajouter cette victoire à toutes les autres" (*Critique* 96–97); "la victoire qu'Hercule remporte sur lui-même" (88); "la victoire de soi-même" (87); "vainqueur de son amour et de lui-même" (92).

25. In Corneille's 1660 "Discours de l'utilité [...] du poème dramatique" (*OC* 3:122).

26. "il faut maintenir le théâtre dans une grande réserve, et en éloigner toute représentation et toute idée d'action illicite; car [...] les spectacles dissolus seraient capables d'efféminer les hommes, et en même temps de les rendre brutaux et sanguinaires" (Terrasson, *Dissertation* 1:250–51).

27. For Terrasson, that includes banishing any aspect of the story that might make vice appear respectable: "The embellishments to be banned are those that act to disguise and authorize vice, or to make it admired" ("Les embellissements défendus sont ceux qui vont à déguiser, à autoriser, et à faire admirer le vice"; *Dissertation* 1:295).

28. "Le second genre [...] consiste à exposer dans une double catastrophe la chute des méchants et la délivrance des bons: ce second genre a peu de difficulté et il n'offre que la manière la plus simple d'instruire les hommes par des exemples [...] Les héros parfaits sont admis dans ce genre de tragédie" (Terrasson, *Dissertation* 1:202–3).

29. "La tragédie propose naturellement les vices à fuir et le poème épique les vertus à imiter" (Terrasson, *Dissertation* 1:273).

30. On the survival of this tradition, see Murrin, *Allegorical Epic*; Couton, *Écritures*; Gaillard, *Fables*; and Boch, *Les dieux*.

31. See for example, "Chapitre VII, *Manière de faire une Fable*. La première chose par où l'on doit commencer pour faire une fable, est de choisir l'instruction et le point de morale qui lui doit servir de fond, selon le dessein et la fin que l'on se propose" (Le Bossu, *Traité* 37).

32. "Dans tout ce que l'on entreprend avec conduite, la fin que l'on se propose est toujours la première chose que l'on a dans l'esprit, et sur laquelle on règle l'ouvrage entier et toutes ses parties" (Le Bossu, *Traité* 43).

33. Rabelais in his prologue to *Gargantua*. Montaigne skeptically questions Homeric allegories in his "Apologie de Raymond Sebond" (*Essais* II.12.586), but shows considerable more respect for the poet's esoteric knowledge in "Des plus excellents hommes" (II.36). See Ford, "Montaigne's Homer."

34. "For I find it was an ancient vanity in Chrysippus, that troubled himself with great contention to fasten the assertions of the Stoics upon the fictions of the ancient poets. [...] Surely of those poets which are now extant, even Homer himself (notwithstanding he was made a kind of scripture by the later schools of the Grecians), yet I should without any difficulty pronounce that his fables had no such inwardness in his own meaning" (Bacon, *Advancement* IV.4, p. 104).

35. Spinoza does not argue that allegory is entirely absent in early antiquity. Indeed, it was a figure entirely in keeping with the metaphorical thinking typical of prephilosophical thought. However, as he argues in chapter 6 of the *Treatise*, philologists can admit as legitimate only those allegories, generally quite plain to sight, that are verified to be in total conformity with the limited knowledge and the linguistic practices of the time.

36. Homère says: “Il faut que vous ayez eu beaucoup d’art pour déguiser ainsi en petits contes, les instructions les plus importantes que la morale puisse donner, et pour couvrir vos pensées sous des images aussi justes, et aussi familières que celles-là” (Fontenelle, *OC* 1:67).

37. “il n’y avait rien dans l’*Iliade*, ni dans l’*Odyssée*, à quoi [les savants] ne donnassent des allégories les plus belles du monde. Ils soutenaient que tous les secrets de la théologie, de la physique, de la morale, et des mathématiques même, étaient renfermés dans ce que vous aviez écrit. Véritablement il y avait quelque difficulté à les développer; où l’un trouvait un sens moral, l’autre en trouvait un physique; mais après cela, ils convenaient que vous aviez tout su, et tout dit à qui le comprenait bien” (Fontenelle, *OC* 1:67).

38. La Motte thus remarks of the confusion of the Homeric epic: “It is not the same with the fables of Aesop; the action is short and without multiple episodes, and the moral truth contained in it is clear” (“Il n’en est pas de même des fables d’Esopé; l’action en est courte et débarrassée d’épisodes, et la vérité morale en est claire”; *Textes critiques* 307).

Chapter 11: The Ineffable Effect

1. Critical opinion, which too often still clings to the idea of Boileau as rigid enforcer of decorum and reason, can even today be astonished at his revolutionary promotion of the sublime. Consider, for example, this formula in the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, under the definition of “sublime”: “[the sublime] made no great impression until the late 17th century. Paradoxically enough, it was Boileau, the high priest of French neoclassicism, who launched the *Peri hypsous* [Longinus’ treatise on the sublime] in its great modern career and thus helped to prepare the ultimate downfall of Classicism.” In the mid-twentieth century, American critics—notably Brody (*Boileau*) and Borgerhoff (*Freedom*)—helped to free Boileau from his conventional caricature; later work by Litman (*Le sublime*), Beugnot and Zuber (*Boileau*), and Marin (“Le Sublime”) exploited this opening. I am particularly indebted to recent analyses by (among others mentioned later) Cronk (*Classical*), Hache (*Le langage*), Gilby (“Sous le signe” and *Sublime*), Fumaroli (“Les abeilles” 129–78), and Génétiot (*Le classicisme* 415–45).

2. See chapter 9 (“The Ancients Respond”).

3. La Motte reports the following as a secret confession from Boileau—even though we have seen that the *Art poétique* comes quite near to making the same point (absent the remarks on comedy): “I remember one day asking [Boileau] to justify the absurdity and indecency of Homer’s gods. He disdained justifying them by the trivial aid of allegory, and instead wished to confide in me an opinion that was his alone. Even though he was convinced of its truth, he did not want it made public. It was that Homer feared boring his audience with the continual tragedy of his subject; that having only deadly combats and passions to portray with his human characters, he wanted to enliven his matter at the expense of the gods themselves; and that he made them play a kind of comedy in the intervals of his plot in order to relieve the reader, who, without such interludes, would have tired of the continual combats. It would be easy for me to show that such a perspective magnifies the faults of Homer rather than excusing him: it makes Homer gratuitously impious” (“Je me souviens qu’un jour je demandais raison à M. Despréaux de la bizarrerie et de l’indécence des dieux d’Homère. Il dédaigna de les justifier par le secours trivial des allégories, et il voulut bien me faire confidence d’un sentiment qui lui était propre, quoique tout persuadé qu’il en était,

il n'ait pas voulu le rendre public: c'est qu'Homère avait craint d'ennuyer par le tragique continu de son sujet; que n'ayant de la part des hommes que des combats et des passions funestes à peindre, il avait voulu égayer le fonds de sa matière aux dépens des dieux mêmes, et qu'il leur avait fait jouer la comédie dans les entr'actes de son action, pour délasser le lecteur que la continuité des combats aurait rebuté sans ces intermèdes. Il me serait facile de faire voir que cette idée aggrave plus la faute d'Homère qu'elle ne l'excuse: elle le rend impie gratuitement"; *Discours* 26–28). Even Anne Dacier, no doubt the Ancient partisan who still clung most tightly to the allegorical tradition, had to admit the limits of its appeal in the early Enlightenment: "Our century disdains these veils and shadows, and prizes only what is clear and simple" ("Notre siècle méprise ces voiles et ces ombres, et n'estime que ce qui est simple et clair"; *L'Iliade* viii).

4. "It must be understood that by sublime, Longinus does not mean what orators call the sublime style" ("Il faut donc savoir que par sublime, Longin n'entend pas ce que les orateurs appellent le style sublime"; Boileau, *OC* 338).

5. "For it does not, properly speaking, persuade, but it ravishes, it transports, and it produces in us a certain admiration mixed with astonishment and surprise, which is different than simply causing pleasure, or persuading" ("Car il ne persuade pas proprement, mais il ravit, il transporte, et produit en nous une certaine admiration mêlée d'étonnement et de surprise, qui est toute autre chose que de plaire seulement, ou de persuader"; Boileau, *Traité*, chapter 1, in *OC* 341).

6. Boileau's translation of Longinus's *On the Sublime*, chapter 29, in *OC* 389–90.

7. Boileau draws on Longinus's denunciation of affectation and verbosity in attacking the "excesses" so contrary to the true sublime (chapter 32, in *OC* 337).

8. The original 1674 preface mentioned only Genesis; in the 1701 edition Boileau added the example from Corneille's 1640 *Horace*. Boileau's praise of the modern playwright, here considered the peer of Moses or Homer, can be seen as part of his effort to lift the quarrel beyond the matter of rival historical periods and toward a broader debate concerning aesthetic philosophies. In 1713 Boileau published his tenth *Réflexion*, which returns to both Genesis and Corneille to prove once again that the sublime can be the "simplest way to speak" ("la manière de parler la plus simple"; *OC* 549).

9. See Cronk, *Classical* 1–28.

10. "ces mots [...] qui ont quelque chose de magnifique, et dont l'obscurité élégante et majestueuse nous fait concevoir beaucoup de choses au-delà de ce qu'elles semblent dire" (Boileau, *OC* 551).

11. Three years before the publication of Boileau's translation of Longinus, Bouhours examined the ineffable in his 1671 *Entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*, beginning with Corneille's definition (from *Rodogune*, act 1, sc. 5, in *OC* 2:217) of a "je ne sais quoi qu'on ne peut expliquer" (*Les entretiens* 281). Like Boileau's sublime, its exact logic "escapes the most penetrating and subtle intelligence" ("échappe à l'intelligence la plus pénétrante et la plus subtile"; 284); however, Bouhours extends the field of its operations to the broad sweep of daily life. For the relation of the sublime to the broader concept of the *je ne sais quoi*, see Scholar, *The Je-ne-sais-quoi* 197–203; Gilby, *Sublime Worlds* 119–22; Marin, "Le Sublime."

12. The Moderns "must learn that words in different languages do not always relate exactly to each other. [...] Each language has its strange peculiarity" ("doivent savoir que les mots des langues ne répondent pas toujours juste les uns aux autres. [...] Les langues ont chacune leur bizarrerie"; Boileau, *OC* 533).

13. "Je ne prétends donc pas dans une traduction si littérale, avoir fait sentir toute la force de l'original; dont la beauté consiste principalement dans le nombre, l'arrangement, et la magnificence des paroles" (Boileau, *Réflexion* VIII, in *OC* 529).

14. "La seule langue grecque est également propre à dire tout avec élégance" (Longepierre, preface to *Les idylles nouvelles*, n.p.).

15. "Un auteur est charmant dans sa langue [...]; il sera barbare dans une autre" (*Discours* 53). Longepierre returns to the irreducible quality of language in his 1690 translation of the *idylles*: "What is beautiful in one language is not always beautiful in another" ("Ce qui est beau dans une langue, n'est pas toujours beau dans une autre"; preface to *Les idylles nouvelles*, n.p.).

16. "Les copies en un mot ont toujours moins d'agrément et de vivacité que les originaux." In translations "ce n'est pas le génie et l'enthousiasme qui travaille alors, c'est le jugement seul. [...] L]a raison réprim[e] le feu d'imagination" (Longepierre, *Théocrite* 26–27). Boivin likewise laments the loss in modern languages of the untranslatable "énergie" of Homer and the particular character of ancient Greek (*Apologie* 12, 220–3).

17. Boileau translates the passage from Longinus's seventh chapter thus: "De là vient, à mon avis, que, comme Homère a composé son *Iliade* durant que son esprit était en sa plus grande vigueur, tout le corps de son ouvrage est dramatique et plein d'action; au lieu que la meilleure partie de l'*Odyssée* se passe en narrations, qui est le génie de la vieillesse; tellement qu'on le peut comparer dans ce dernier ouvrage au soleil quand il se couche, qui a toujours sa même grandeur, mais qui n'a plus tant d'ardeur ni de force"; *OC* 355 ("This is why, in my opinion, since Homer composed the *Iliad* while his spirit was in its greatest vigor, the whole body of the work is dramatic and full of action; while most of the *Odyssey* takes place through narration, which is the genius of old age; such that one can compare the latter work to the sun when it is setting, which still has all its grandeur, but with less ardor and strength").

18. "je vous rapporte encore ici un passage de notre poète, quand il parle des hommes, afin de vous faire voir combien Homère est héroïque lui-même, en peignant le caractère d'un héros. [...] En effet, Homère en cet endroit est comme un vent favorable qui seconde l'ardeur des combattants; car il ne se remue pas avec moins de violence, que s'il était épris aussi de fureur" (Boileau, *Traité*, chapter 7, in *OC* 353–54).

19. See Boileau, *Traité*, chapter 27, in *OC* 386.

20. I would not, however, understate the strength of Boileau's privileging of the non-rational in the opening of the poem. "It is in vain that a presumptuous author thinks he can gain the heights of the art of verses in Parnassus: If he feels no secret influence from the heavens, if his star has not made him a poet at birth, he will remain forever a prisoner of his inherently limited genius. For him Phoebus is deaf and Pegasus obstinate" ("C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur / Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur. / S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète, / Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète, / Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif. / Pour lui Phébus est sourd, et Pégase est rétif"; *Art poétique* I, in *OC* 157). The prominence of this passage at the opening of the poem, whatever reservations may follow, grants a clear supremacy to the native faculty of genius. For all his praise of good sense, Boileau profoundly differentiates poetic inspiration from the faculty of reason, which governs other secular discourses, such as philosophy or science. Poetry is furthermore equally freed from the authority, tradition, and sanctioned faith that reign in matters of religious orthodoxy. Despite the reference to the unspecified "heavens,"

Boileau's inspiration is delivered by fictional gods, sharply distinguished from any presumably real deity that might communicate to the prophet or believer. Boileau here effectively counters the Christian demands that we have seen placed on poetry by certain Moderns. The mixture of astrological and mythological references in these opening lines creates instead a separate domain for poetry outside the bounds of contemporary theology. This is perhaps the key advantage of Parnassian inspiration for Boileau. Its anachronism is instrumental. Through recourse to the remote pagan past, it allows the Ancient apologist to posit a source for poetry independent of Desmarets's religious grounding and yet fully vested with the grandeur of myth—that is, with a sublime but safely defunct divinity.

21. "We have to believe that he is indeed sublime, since no one can reach his heights, either to imitate him, as Horace said, or to understand him, as Jean Benoist, one of his excellent interpreters, said, assuring us that before him the most learned men did not understand him at all" ("il faut croire qu'il est bien sublime, puisque personne n'y peut atteindre, soit pour l'imiter, comme dit Horace, soit pour l'entendre, comme dit Jean Benoist, l'un de ses plus excellents interprètes, qui assure qu'avant lui les plus savants hommes n'y ont presque rien compris"; Perrault, *Parallèle* 3:160–61).

22. Boileau argues that Perrault, ignorant of Greek, can never understand Pindar's genius, because "the beauties of this poet are tightly contained inside his language" ("les beautés de ce poète sont extrêmement renfermées dans sa langue"; *Discours sur l'ode*, in *OC* 227).

23. Longepierre, *Discours* 112. See also his Longinian apology for Homer's "natural" freedom and "négligences" (92–93).

24. "Comme les plus habiles peintres dans le beau fini ne touchent pas tout avec le même soin; mais laissent quelque chose à désirer en certains endroits, afin de donner plus de force et plus de relief aux principales beautés d'un tableau: ainsi un grand homme laisse exprès ces petits manques de soin pour faire sentir davantage ce qui doit frapper dans un ouvrage" (Longepierre, *Discours* 105–6).

25. Boivin will begin his 1715 *Apologie d'Homère* with a summary of these key points, vaunting the "faults" of the "grands génies" above the methodical order of "mediocre" writers (3).

26. See Rapin, *Réflexions*, chapters v (17–18), xii–xiv (25–28), and xvi–xix (30–35).

27. See Cronk, *Classical* 31–50.

28. See Marin, "Le Sublime" 221–22; Saint Girons, *Fiat* 22–23 and *passim*; Hartmann, *Du sublime* 5–9 and *passim*.

29. See Brody, *Boileau* 36–38; Hepp, *Homère* 573; Cronk, *Classical* 172–75.

30. Jean-François Lyotard states the case thus: "The sublime is perhaps the mode of artistic sensibility that defines modernity. It is a paradox that it was first introduced for literary discussion and energetically defended by the French writer whom literary history places among the most ardent defenders of the classicism of the ancients. In 1674, Boileau published his [...] *Du Sublime*" ("Le sublime est peut-être le mode de la sensibilité artistique qui caractérise la modernité. Un paradoxe est qu'il a été présenté à la discussion des lettrés et défendu avec énergie par l'écrivain français que l'histoire littéraire range parmi les défenseurs les plus acharnés du classicisme des Anciens. En 1674, Boileau publie son [...] *Du Sublime*"; *L'inhumain* 105). For Lyotard, Boileau's renovation of the sublime opens the way for the aesthetic scandals that modernism adopts as its hallmark: "imperfections themselves, infractions against taste, ugliness, all have their place in the effect of shock" ("Les imperfections mêmes, les entorses au goût, la laideur ont leur part dans l'effet du choc";

108). Marc Fumaroli, however different his approach and conclusions, concurs with Lyotard on the profoundly nonconformist nature of Boileau's sublime: "Under Louis XIV it is the Ancients who accept what was vibrant, disconcerting, and harrowing [...], while the Moderns were favorable to the most uniform and comfortable of aesthetic and moral conventions"; "[C]e sont sous Louis XIV les Anciens qui admettent ce qu'il y a de vif, de déconcertant, de déchirant [...], tandis que les Modernes sont favorables à des conventions morales et esthétiques uniformes et confortables" ("Les abeilles" 167–68).

31. Hayes, in "Meaning," employs this formula for Anne Dacier's modernity.

32. Lyotard, for example, posits that Boileau's work on Longinus "consummates the [...] rupture with the classical institution of *technē*" ("consomme la rupture [...] avec l'institution classique de la techné") and moves the center of interest away from the creator to the reader or beholder: "So it is that aesthetics, the analysis of the sentiments of the receiver, comes to supplant poetics and rhetoric [...]. It is no longer the question: how to make art, but, rather, what is it to experience art?" ("C'est ainsi que l'esthétique, l'analyse des sentiments de l'amateur, viennent supplanter la poétique et la rhétorique. [...] Non plus: comment faire de l'art, mais qu'est-ce qu'éprouver l'art?"; *L'inhumain* 107–9). See also Gilby on Boileau's attention to the sublime as an interpersonal "encounter" privileging the active engagement of the individual reader (*Sublime Worlds* 122–23, 138–40).

33. See introduction.

34. "tant de charmes enfin qu'on ne peut désigner qu'imparfaitement; et tant d'autres qu'on peut bien sentir, mais qu'il est impossible d'exprimer" (Longepierre, *Discours* 168).

35. On the relativism inherent in the late seventeenth-century sublime and *je ne sais quoi*, see Chantalat, *À la recherche* 83–96.

36. Similar recourse to the idea of "uniform consent" was increasingly popular in the Christian apologetics of the period. Confronted with the menace of a rationalist mechanical universe, some sought a sure proof of the validity of faith in the putatively constant phenomena of the history of faith; as Jonathan Israel notes, they felt that "only empiricism c[ould] save religion" (*Radical* 483). The most prominent of these French apologists was no doubt Huet, who, with his "liberal and empirical views about religion," wished to "establish religious truth inductively out of the materials of comparative religion" (Popkin, *History* 278–79). In appropriating such arguments for literary criticism, the Ancients arguably exploit a parallel between the mysteries of faith and grace and those of poetry and its sublime effect.

37. Longepierre goes to great lengths to catalogue the impressive breadth of strong figures, not easily cowed, who were moved to enthusiasm by ancient poets (*Discours* 30–31, 176–80).

38. See chapter 9 ("The Ancients Respond").

39. Longepierre thus distinguishes "bad prejudice"—the unfavorable kind that hinders receptivity—from "good" prejudice, the favorable kind that, although it cannot properly produce an emotional effect, propitiously predisposes readers to open their senses and hearts to the power of a literary work (*Discours* 32–35).

40. "The antiquity of a writer is no guarantee of his worth; but the ancient and constant admiration that has always been felt for his works is an infallible and sure proof that one should admire them" ("L'Antiquité d'un écrivain n'est pas un titre certain de son mérite: mais l'antique et constante admiration qu'on a toujours eue pour ses ouvrages, est une preuve sûre et infaillible qu'on les doit admirer"; Boileau, *OC* 527).

41. On “la querelle des *Imaginaires*,” see Forestier, *Jean Racine* 259–77.

42. Two notable exceptions are Racine’s attack on comic obscenity in the preface to *Les Plaideurs* and, more importantly, the concluding passage of his preface to *Phèdre*, in which, after having defended the moral ambiguity of his heroine, he stresses that she is still a profoundly virtuous character that would corrupt no spectator. This last attempt to defend the play can be considered, however, more a statement of Racine’s moral pessimism (even the most virtuous humans, he implies, are profoundly sinful) than support for the kind of edifying literature favored by the Moderns.

43. In a letter to Montchesnay, in which Boileau also rejects moral censorship of theater, he further develops this distinction (*OC* 833–34).

44. Stendhal, for example, asserted that Racine “painted the true life of his times” (“a peint la vraie vie de son temps”); even more anachronistically, Émile Faguet deemed *Britannicus* nothing less than a “drame à la Zola” (both cited in Rohou, *Jean Racine* 11, 13).

45. Le Clerc and Coras with their 1675 version of *Iphigénie*; Pradon with his 1677 *Phèdre et Hippolyte*. See Forestier, *Jean Racine* 529–33, 549–60; and my “Playing with Fire.”

46. The anonymous 1675 *Remarques sur les Iphigénies* perfectly illustrates the moral scandal that Racine’s plays could provoke. “What motivation [could possibly] be so pressing as to inspire this father [Agamemnon] to immolate a daughter so dear to him? [...] Is it possible that so many fathers have seen performances of this play without crying out in indignation against the violence it commits against both nature and verisimilitude?” (“Quels motifs [pourraient être] assez pressants pour inspirer à ce père le dessein barbare d’immoler une fille qui lui est si chère? [...] Est-il possible que tant de pères aient vu la représentation de cette pièce sans se récrier sur la violence qu’elle fait à la nature et à la vraisemblance?”; Racine, *OCI*, 795–96).

47. “There is not an odious serpent or monster that cannot, when imitated by art, please the eyes. [...] So, to charm us, weeping tragedy makes the blood-soaked Oedipus speak of his sorrows, or the parricidal Orestes express his terror. And to entertain us, extract our tears” (“Il n’est point de serpent, ni de monstre odieux, / Qui par l’art imité, ne puisse plaire aux yeux. / [...] Ainsi, pour nous charmer, la tragédie en pleurs / D’Œdipe tout sanglant fit parler les douleurs, / D’Oreste parricide exprima les alarmes. / Et pour nous divertir nous arracha des larmes” (Boileau, *Art poétique* III, in *OC* 169).

48. Dacier returns to the delicate balance between beauty and likeness in her preface to *L’Odyssée*; although always nuanced, she again ultimately sides with fidelity to the “true traits” of the character, including Achilles’ fury and volatility (xxxiii–xxxiv).

49. Boivin: “Homer is true, and nothing is beautiful but the true; he painted men as he knew them, after life. [...] A person without any faults is but a chimera. It is a beautiful portrait that resembles nothing” (“Homère est vrai; et rien n’est beau que le vrai; il a peint les hommes tels qu’il les connaissait, et d’après nature. [...] L’homme sans défaut est une chimère. C’est un beau portrait qui ne ressemble à rien”; *Apologie* 76–77).

50. Given the tremendous emphasis on “pity” and “fear” in the *Art poétique*’s commentary on tragedy, Boileau’s silence concerning catharsis here can only be called deafening. This silence is all the more remarkable given the attention paid to Aristotelian purgation that same year in Rapin’s *Réflexions sur la Poétique* (“en général”: chapter x [23]; “en particulier”: chapters xvii–xviii [97–100]). An exception among the defenders of the Ancient cause here is André Dacier (Anne’s spouse), whose preface to the 1692 *Poétique* features a moralizing explication of tragic purgation. His predominating interest in the utility of lit-

erature, however, makes André Dacier an outlier among his Ancient allies. For a contextualization of Dacier's commentary on catharsis, see Lyons, *Kingdom* 48–56.

51. Boivin of course does not entirely discount any moral utility in the epic poem; that utility, however, comes simply from the piercing representation of virtues and vices. By the simple act of depicting them frankly, the poet teaches what they are (*Apologie* 19–21). Although Anne Dacier similarly explicates the utility of lifelike representation, she also, in a departure from her ally, makes a claim for the didactic lesson of the Homeric epic, viewed (in Le Bossu fashion) as an instructive fable (*L'Iliade* lxviii–lxix).

52. “Des siècles, des pays, étudiez les mœurs. / Les climats font souvent les diverses humeurs” (Boileau, *Art poétique* III, in *OC* 171).

53. “For one must not believe that ideas of verisimilitude and decorum are the same in all ages” (Longepierre, *Discours* 95). See chapter 9 (“The Ancients Respond”).

54. “Christian humility is a virtue that the heroes of antiquity never knew” (“L’humilité chrétienne est une vertu que les héros de l’antiquité n’ont jamais connue”; *Apologie* 53). Boivin thus attacks the anachronism of La Motte’s applying Christian standards to Homeric heroes (*Apologie* 64). Or, as Anne Dacier phrased it: “In a word, it is up to the poet to imitate what is, and not what comes after him” (“En un mot le poète imite ce qui est, et non pas ce qui n’a été qu’après lui” (*L'Iliade* xxiv).

55. See Dacier’s commentary on portraiture in chapter 9 (“The Ancients Respond”).

56. “De plus la grossièreté difforme de la religion des anciens, et le défaut de vraie philosophie morale, où ils étaient avant Socrate, doivent en un certain sens faire un grand honneur à l’Antiquité” (Fénelon, *Œuvres* 2:1192).

57. In Boivin’s formula: “If the heroes of Homer’s age do not resemble those of our own, this difference, far from displeasing us, should give us pleasure” (“Si les héros du siècle d’Homère ne ressemblent pas aux héros de notre siècle, cette différence, bien loin de nous déplaire, devrait nous faire plaisir”; *Apologie* 47).

Conclusion: After the Quarrel

1. For Voltaire’s assertion of the limits of translation, see also *Letters* 97, 107.

2. It is not, of course, only the *French* reflection on ancients and moderns that promoted such parallel paradigms. As Dryden had phrased it as early as 1668, “Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare” (*Of Dramatic Poesy* 1:70).

3. For the impact of Boileau’s Longinus on Pope and British criticism, see Shankman, *Pope’s Iliad* 101–28, and Clark, *Boileau* 361–79.

4. Pope’s essay was published in *The Guardian*; an edited version appears in Hunt and Willis, *Genius of Place* 204–8.

5. Indeed, Pope’s even less radical vision of Homer’s “wild Paradise” provoked the ire of Anne Dacier, who indignantly riposted that the *Iliad* “is the most regular and symmetrical garden there ever was” (“est le jardin le plus régulier et le plus symétrisé qu’il y ait jamais eu”; *Quelques réflexions sur la Préface anglaise de M. Pope*, cited in Hepp, *Homère* 643). Pope was wounded by this attack, and responded that he “had always fought under Mme Dacier’s banner” and would never think of “betraying our common cause” of defending Homer (*Poems* 10.392).

6. Pope, *Poems* 7:153. Later critics, like Samuel Johnson, will legitimately assert that

Pope's translation, despite its paratextual celebration of untamed genius, "made Homer graceful, but lost some of his sublimity" ("Life of Pope," in *Lives* 3:240).

7. "The poetical genius of the English resembles a tufted tree planted by the hand of nature, that throws out a thousand branches at random, and spreads unequally, but with great vigor. It dies if you attempt to force its nature, and to lop and dress it in the same manner as the trees of the garden of Marly" (Voltaire, *Letters* 92).

8. "The great merit of Homer was to have been a sublime painter" ("Le grand mérite d'Homère est d'avoir été un peintre sublime"); Voltaire thus finds "revolting" La Motte's adaptation of the *Iliad*, which, he laments "eliminated many of Homer's faults, but kept none of his beauty" ("a ôté beaucoup de défauts à Homère; mais n'a conservé aucune de ses beautés"; *English Essays* 420–21).

9. Du Bos, *Réflexions*; see especially part 2, sections 33–39.

10. "Having read many criticisms made in our day against the ancients, I have admired these critics, while still admiring the ancients. I have studied my own taste and [...] the more I have examined [it], the more I have found that I was right to think just as I had *felt*" ("Ayant lu plusieurs critiques faites de nos jours contre les anciens, j'ai admiré plusieurs de ces critiques, mais j'ai admiré toujours les anciens. J'ai étudié mon goût et [...] plus j'ai examiné, plus j'ai trouvé que j'avais raison de penser comme j'avais *sent*"); Montesquieu, *Mes pensées*, in *OC* 1:1024; italics mine).

11. Montesquieu, *Mes pensées*, in *OC* 1:1019. See also the *Essai sur le goût* for Montesquieu's delimitation of *a priori* rules, which must sometimes submit to taste (2:1260).

12. Attributed by Hume to his "Skeptic" (in *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays* 125). See also the essay *Of the Standard of Taste* itself and its mockery of submitting art "to geometrical truth and exactness" (7).

13. In his article "Encyclopédie," Diderot writes: "I find it intolerable to lean on the authority of [ancient] authors when it comes to matters of rational examination [...]. Let there especially be no verses, they seem so feeble and poor in a philosophical discussion. We must limit such ornaments to articles on literature; there I can approve of them" ("Je ne peux souffrir qu'on s'appuie de l'autorité des auteurs dans les questions de raisonnement [...]. Point de vers surtout, ils ont l'air si faible et si mesquin au travers d'une discussion philosophique. Il faut renvoyer ces ornements légers aux articles de littérature; c'est là que je peux les approuver" (*Encyclopédie* 5:642).

14. For Fumaroli, for example, Rousseau represents the victory of the Ancient party, writing what they "dared" not yet express ("Les abeilles" 214).

15. "In general, *Émile* will develop more of a taste for ancient books than for ours, simply because, being first, the ancients were closer to nature and truer to their native genius. Whatever La Motte and the abbé Terrasson might have said on the matter, there is in fact no progress of reason in the human race, because what we gain in one area, we lose in another" ("En général, *Émile* prendra plus de goût pour les livres des anciens que pour les nôtres, par cela seul qu'étant les premiers, les anciens sont les plus près de la nature et que leur génie est plus à eux. Quoi qu'en aient pu dire La Motte et l'abbé Terrasson il n'y a point de vrai progrès de raison dans l'espèce humaine, parce que tout ce qu'on gagne d'un côté on le perd de l'autre"; J.-J. Rousseau, *Émile*, in *OC* 4:676).

Bibliography

Primary Texts

- Addison, Joseph. *The Spectator*. Ed. D. Bond. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.
- Aubignac, François-Hédelin (abbé d'). *Conjectures académiques, ou Dissertation sur l'Iliade*. Paris: Fournier, 1715. Repr., ed. V. Magnien. Paris: Hachette, 1925.
- . *La pratique du théâtre*. 1657. Paris: Champion, 1927.
- Bacon, Francis. *The New Organon*. Ed. L. Jardine and M. Silverthorne. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *The Advancement of Learning*. Ed. W. A. Wright. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891.
- Bayle, Pierre. *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. Amsterdam: Brunel, 1740.
- Blackwell, Thomas. *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer*. London, 1736.
- Boileau-Despréaux [Boileau, Nicolas]. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. F. Escal. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1966.
- Boivin, Jean. *Apologie d'Homère et Bouclier d'Achille*. Paris: Jouenne, 1715. Repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1970.
- Bossuet, Jacques Bénigne. *Discours sur l'histoire universelle à Monseigneur le Dauphin*. Paris: Marbre-Cramoisy, 1681.
- Bouhours, Dominique. *Les entretiens d'Ariste et d'Eugène*. Ed. B. Beugnot and G. Declercq. Paris: Champion, 2003.
- Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. 1756. New York: Penguin, 1998.
- Callières, François de. *Histoire poétique de la guerre nouvellement déclarée entre les anciens et les modernes*. 1688. Geneva: Slatkine, 1971.
- Chapelain, Jean. "De la lecture des vieux romans." In *Opuscules critiques*. Ed. A. C. Hunter. Paris: Droz, 1936.
- Chateaubriand, François-Auguste-René de. *Essai sur les révolutions; Génie du christianisme*. Ed. M. Regard. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1978.
- . *Œuvres romanesques et voyages I*. Ed. M. Regard. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1969.

- Chénier, André. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. G. Walter. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1958.
- Corneille, Pierre. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. G. Couton. 3 vols. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1980–87.
- Dacier, André. *La Poétique d'Aristote, traduite en français avec des remarques critiques*. Paris: Barbin, 1692.
- Dacier, Anne Lefebvre. *Les comédies de Térence, traduites en français, avec des remarques*. Paris: Thierry, 1688.
- . *Des causes de la corruption du goût*. Paris: Rigaud, 1714. Repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1970.
- . *Homère défendu contre l'apologie du R. P. Hardouin, ou Suite des causes de la corruption du goût*. Paris, Coignard, 1716. Repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1971.
- . *L'Iliade d'Homère traduite en français, avec des remarques*. 3 vols. Paris: Rigaud, 1711.
- . *L'Odyssée d'Homère traduite en français, avec des remarques*. 4 vols. Paris: 1731.
- Dennis, John. *The Critical Works*. 2 vols. Ed. E. N. Hooker. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1939–43.
- Descartes, René. *Discours de la méthode*. Paris: Vrin, 1930.
- Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin, Jean. *Clovis, ou La France chrétienne*. Ed. G. Hall. Paris: Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1972.
- Diderot, Denis. *Œuvres esthétiques*. Ed. P. Vernière. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1994.
- . *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*. Ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond D'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Projet (Winter 2008 Edition), R. Morrissey (ed.), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu>.
- Dryden, John. *Of Dramatic Poesy and Other Critical Essays*. 2 vols. Ed. G. Watson. London: Dent, 1964.
- Du Bos, Jean-Baptiste (l'abbé). *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*. Paris: 1719.
- Félibien, André. *La description du château de Versailles*. Paris: 1687.
- . "Préface aux Conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture pendant l'année 1667." In *Les Conférences de l'Académie royale de peinture et de sculpture au XVIIe siècle*. Ed. A. Mérot. Paris: École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 1996.
- Fénelon, François de Pons de Salignac de La Mothe. *Œuvres*. Ed. J. Le Brun. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1983–97.
- Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier de. *Histoire des oracles*. Ed. L. Maigrion. Paris: Didier, 1971.
- . *Nouveaux dialogues des morts*. Ed. J. Dagen. Paris: Didier, 1971.
- . *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. Alain Niderst. 9 vols. Paris: Fayard, 1990–2001.
- . *De l'origine des fables (1724)*. Ed. J.-R. Carré. Paris: F. Alcan, 1932.
- Fourmont, Étienne. *Examen pacifique de la querelle de Madame Dacier et de Monsieur de la Motte sur Homère*. 1716. Repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1971.
- Furetière, Antoine. *Dictionnaire universel*. La Haye, 1690.
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von. "Winckelmann and His Age." In *Collected Works*, vol. 3: *Essays on Art and Literature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Hardouin, (père) Jean. *Apologie d'Homère, où l'on explique le véritable dessein de son Iliade et sa théomorphologie*. Paris: Rigaud, 1716.

- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *On World History: An Anthology*. Trans. E. A. Menze and M. Palma. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997.
- Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. 1651. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002.
- Houdar de La Motte, Antoine. *See* La Motte.
- Huet, Pierre-Daniel. *Demonstratio evangelica*. 2 vols. Amsterdam: Waesbergios and Boom, 1680.
- . *Traité de l'origine des romans*. 1670. Paris: Nizet, 1971.
- Hume, David. *Of the Standard of Taste and Other Essays*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Lives of the English Poets*. Ed. G. B. Hill. 3. vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*. Trans. J. T. Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- La Bruyère, Jean de. *Les caractères ou les mœurs de ce siècle*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1990.
- Lafitau, Joseph-François. *Mœurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*. Paris: Saugrain l'aîné, 1724.
- La Fontaine, Jean de. *Œuvres complètes*. Vol. 2: *Œuvres diverses*. Ed. P. Clarac. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1958.
- La Mothe Le Vayer, François de. *De la vertu des païens*. In *Libertins du XVII^e siècle*, vol. 2. Ed. J. Prévot. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 2004.
- La Motte, Antoine Houdar de [a.k.a. La Motte-Houdar, Antoine]. *Discours sur Homère*. Paris: Prault, 1754.
- . *Textes critiques*. Ed. F. Gevrey and B. Guion. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- . *Œuvres complètes*. 11 vols. Paris, 1754. Repr. in 2 vols, Geneva, Slatkine, 1970.
- Le Bossu, (père) René. *Traité du poème épique*. Paris: Pralard, 1676.
- Lecoq, A.-M., ed. *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2001.
- Longepierre, Hilaire-Bernard de. *Discours sur les anciens*. Paris: Abouin, 1687.
- , trans. *Les idylles de Théocrite, traduites du grec en vers français*. Paris: Aubouin, 1688.
- , trans. *Les idylles nouvelles*. Paris: P. Aubouyn, 1690.
- Louis XIV. *Manière de montrer les jardins de Versailles*. Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2001.
- Marivaux. *Œuvres de jeunesse*. Ed. F. Deloffre. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1972.
- Molière. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. G. Couton. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1971.
- Montaigne, Michel de. *Les Essais*. Ed. Villey-Saulnier. Paris: PUF, 2004.
- Montesquieu. *Œuvres complètes*. 2 vols. Ed. R. Caillois. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1949.
- Pascal, Blaise. *Œuvres complètes*. Ed. J. Chevalier. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1954.
- . *Pensées*. Ed. Léon Brunschvicq. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1958.
- Perrault, Charles. *Apologie des femmes*. Paris: Coignard, 1694.
- . *Contes*. Ed. G. Rouger. Paris: Garnier, 1967.
- . *Critique de l'opéra*. In *Alceste, suivi de La querelle d'Alceste, Anciens et Modernes avant 1680*, 80–102. Ed. W. Brooks, B. Norman and J. M. Zarucchi. Geneva: Droz, 1994.

- . *Les hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle*. Ed. D. J. Culpin. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17), 2003.
- . *Mémoires*. Paris: Renouard, 1909.
- . *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes, en ce qui regarde les arts et les sciences*. 4 vols. Paris: Coignard, 1688–97. Repr., with intro. by H. R. Jauss, Munich: Eidos Verlag, 1964.
- . *La peinture*. Ed. J.-L. Gautier-Gentès. Geneva: Droz, 1992.
- . *Pensées chrétiennes*. Ed. J. Barchilon and C. Velay-Vallantin. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17), 1987.
- . *Le siècle de Louis le Grand*. 1687. In Lecoq, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (see above), 256–73.
- Pope, Alexander. *Poems*. Ed. J. Butt. 11 vols. New Haven: Yale University Press (Twickenham Edition), 1953–67.
- Racine, Jean. *Œuvres complètes I: Théâtre-Poésie*. Ed. G. Forestier. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1999.
- . *Œuvres complètes II: Œuvres diverses*. Ed. R. Picard. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1952.
- Rapin, René. *Réflexions sur la Poétique d'Aristote et sur les ouvrages des poètes anciens et modernes*. Paris: Muguet, 1674.
- Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste. *Correspondance de J.-B. Rousseau et de Brossette*. 2 vols. Ed. P. Bonnefon. Paris, 1910–11.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur son article Genève*. Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1967.
- . *Œuvres complètes*. 5 vols. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1959–95.
- Saint-Evremond, Charles de Marguetel de Saint-Denis (sieur de). *Œuvres en prose*. 4 vols. Paris: Société des textes français modernes, 1965–69.
- Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy (duc de). *Mémoires*. 8 vols. Ed Y. Coirault. Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1983.
- Scaliger, Julius Caesar. *Poetices libri septem*. 1561. Repr., Stuttgart: Frommann, 1964.
- Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper (Third Earl of). *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*. Ed. L. E. Klein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Spinoza, Baruch. *Theological-Political Treatise*. Trans. S. Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001.
- Swift, Jonathan. *A Tale of the Tub [and] The Battle of the Books*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.
- Temple, William. "An Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning." In *The Works of Sir William Temple*, vol. 3. London: Brotherton et al., 1770.
- Terrasson, Jean (abbé). *Dissertation critique sur l'Iliade d'Homère*. 1715. 2 vols. Repr., Geneva: Slatkine, 1971.
- Thomassin, (père) Louis. *La méthode d'étudier et d'enseigner chrétiennement et solidement les lettres humaines par rapport aux lettres divines et aux Écritures*. 3 vols. Paris: Muguet, 1681–82.
- Vico, Giambattista. *The New Science: Third Edition (1744)*. Trans. T. G. Bergin and M. H. Fisch. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- . *On the Study Methods of Our Time*. Trans. E. Gianturco. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990.

- Voltaire. *The English Essays*. In *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, vol. 3B. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996.
- . *Essai sur les mœurs*. In *Œuvres*, vol. 18. Paris: Werdet, 1829.
- . *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. Ed. N. Cronk. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- . *Mélanges*. Ed. J. Van Den Heuvel. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1961.
- . *Œuvres historiques*. Ed. R. Pomeau. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1957.
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *History of the Art of Antiquity*. Intro. by Alex Potts. Los Angeles: Getty, 2006.
- Wood, Robert. *An Essay on the Original Genius and Writings of Homer (1769 and 1775)*. London: Hughes, 1775. Repr., New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976.
- Wotton, William. *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*. London: Leake, 1697.

Studies (after 1850)

- Abramovici, Jean-Christophe. *Obscénité et classicisme*. Paris: PUF, 2003.
- Allen, Peter. "The Role of Myth in Racine: *Andromaque*, *Iphigénie*, *Phèdre*." In *Myth and Legend in French Literature: Essays in Honor of A. J. Steele*, 93–116. Ed. K. Aspley et al. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1982.
- Ankersmit, F. R. *Sublime Historical Experience*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Apostolidès, Jean-Marie. *Le Prince Sacrifié: Théâtre et politique au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1985.
- . *Le roi machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV*. Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1981.
- Aske, Martin. *Keats and Hellenism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. W. R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.
- . "La Cour et la ville." In *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature*, 133–79. Trans. Ralph Manheim. New York: 1959.
- Baron, Hans. "The Querelle of the Ancients and the Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 20.1 (January 1959): 3–22.
- Barthes, Roland. *Œuvres complètes*. Vols 1–3. Ed. E. Marty. Paris: Seuil, 1993–95.
- Becq, Annie. *Genèse de l'esthétique française moderne, 1680–1814*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1994.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- . *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- . *The Roots of Romanticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- Bugnot, Bernard, and Roger Zuber. *Boileau: Visages anciens, visages nouveaux*. Montreal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1973.
- Biet, Christian. *Œdipe en monarchie: Tragédie et théorie juridique à l'âge classique*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1994.
- . *Racine*. Paris: Hachette, 1996.

- Billault, Alain. "On the Sublime." In *The Classical Heritage in France*. Ed. G. Sandy. Boston: Brill, 2002.
- Blocker, Deborah. "Territoires de savoirs et espaces de temporalités: Le sublime de Boileau aux prises avec quelques modernités." *Seventeenth Century French Studies* 29 (2007): 113–23.
- Boch, Julie. *Les dieux désenchantés: La fable dans la pensée française de Huet à Voltaire (1680–1760)*. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- Bolduc, Benoît. "Iphigénie: De la vaine éloquence à l'artifice efficace." In *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, 93–112. Ed. R. Tobin. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17, no. 129), 2001.
- Bonnet, Jean-Claude. *Naissance du panthéon: Essai sur le culte des grands hommes*. Paris: Fayard, 1998.
- Borgerhoff, E. B. O. *The Freedom of French Classicism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Bouwsma, William J. *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550–1640*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- Brewer, Daniel. *The Enlightenment Past: Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century French Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Briggs, Robin. *Early Modern France, 1560–1715*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Brody, Jules. *Boileau et Longinus*. Geneva: Droz, 1958.
- Brooks, William, Buford Norman and Jeanne Morgan Zarucchi. Introduction and commentaries. In *Alceste, suivi de La querelle d'Alceste: Anciens et Modernes avant 1680*. Geneva: Droz, 1994.
- Bryson, Scott. "Rules and Transgression: *Imitatio naturae* and the Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns." *EMF* 3 (1997): 121–148.
- Burke, Peter. *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Bury, Emmanuel. "La philologie dans le concert des savoirs: Mutations et permanence de l'ars critica au XVII^e siècle." In *Le savoir au XVII^e siècle*, ed. J. D. Lyons and C. Welch, 17–33. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17, no. 147), 2003.
- . *Littérature et politesse: L'invention de l'honnête homme, 1580–1750*. Paris: PUF, 1996.
- Bury, J. B. *The Idea of Progress: An Inquiry into Its Origin and Growth*. New York: Macmillan, 1932.
- Buxton, John. *The Grecian Taste: Literature in the Age of Neo-Classicism, 1740–1820*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1978.
- Calder, Andrew. *Molière: The Theory and Practice of Comedy*. London: Athlone, 1993.
- Call, Michael. "The Battle for Molière's Corpse/Corpus in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*." In *Theatre, Fiction, and Poetry in the French Long Seventeenth Century*, 47–60. Ed. R. Zaiser and W. Brooks. Peter Lang, 2007.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Trans. F. C. A. Koelln and J. P. Pettegrove. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951; repr. 1979.
- Cave, Terence. "Ancients and Moderns: France." In *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3: *The Renaissance*. Ed. H. B. Nisbet and C. Raswon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Chandler, James. *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Chantalat, Claude. *À la recherche du goût classique*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1992.

- Chartier, Roger. *Culture écrite et société: l'ordre des livres, XIV^e–XVIII^e siècle*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1996.
- . "George Dandin, ou le social en représentation." *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49.2 (1994) 277–310.
- Clark, A. F. B. *Boileau and the French Classical Critics in England*. Paris: Champion, 1925.
- Clarke, G. W. *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Compagnon, Antoine. *Les antimodernes*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.
- . "Racine and the Moderns." In *Theatrum Mundi: Studies in Honor of Ronald W. Tobin*, 241–49. Charlottesville, VA: Rockwood Press, 2003.
- Couton, Georges. *Écritures codées: essais sur l'allégorie au XVII^e siècle*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1990.
- Cowart, Georgia J. *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Croce, Benedetto. *Guide to Aesthetics*. (1913) Trans. P. Romanell. New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1965.
- Cronk, Nicholas. *The Classical Sublime: French Neoclassicism and the Language of Literature*. Charlottesville, VA: Rockwood Press, 2002.
- . "La querelle du sublime: Théories anciennes et modernes du discours poétique." In Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle à l'autre* (see below) 19–30.
- Csűrös, Klára. *Variétés et vicissitudes du genre épique de Ronsard à Voltaire*. Paris: Champion, 1999.
- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. W. R. Trask. New York: Pantheon (Bollingen), 1953.
- Dagen, Jean. "Du théologique au littéraire: Arnaldiens et Malebranchistes dans la Querelle." In Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle à l'autre* (see below), 63–78.
- . *L'histoire de l'esprit humain dans la pensée française de Fontenelle à Condorcet*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1977.
- . "Pour une histoire de la pensée de Fontenelle." *Revue d'histoire littéraire en France*, Oct.–Dec. 1966: 619–641.
- Dagen, Jean, and Ph. Roger, eds. *Un siècle de deux cents ans? Les XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, continuités et discontinuités*. Paris: Desjonquères, 2004.
- Dandrey, Patrick. "*Dom Juan*," ou *La critique de la raison comique*. Paris: Champion, 1993.
- . "Les deux esthétiques du classicisme français." *Littératures classiques* 19 (1993): 145–70.
- . "Qu'est-ce que le classicisme?" In *L'état classique, 1652–1715: Regards sur la pensée politique de la France dans le second XVII^e siècle*, 43–67. Ed. H. Méchoulan and J. Cornette. Paris: Vrin, 1996.
- Dandrey, Patrick, ed. *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: Le XVII^e siècle*. 2nd ed. Paris: Fayard, 1996.
- Darmon, Jean-Charles. *Le songe libertin*. Paris: Klincksieck, 2004.
- Davies, Simon. "Poetry Reborn." In *The Eighteenth Century Now: Boundaries and Perspectives*, 74–85. Ed. J. Mallinson, Oxford: SVEC, 2005.
- De Certeau, Michel. *L'écriture de l'histoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1975.
- Décultot, Elisabeth. *Johann Joachim Winckelmann: Enquête sur la genèse de l'histoire de l'art*. Paris: PUF, 2000.

- DeJean, Joan. *Ancients against Moderns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- . *The Reinvention of Obscenity: Sex, Lies, and Tabloids in Early Modern France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.
- Delmas, Christian. *Mythologie et mythe dans le théâtre français (1650–1676)*. Geneva: Droz, 1985.
- Denis, Delphine. *Le Parnasse galant: Institution d'une catégorie littéraire au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Champion, 2001.
- Desan, Philippe. *Montaigne, les Cannibales et les Conquistadores*. Paris: Nizet, 1994.
- Desmorest, J. "Pascal and the Querelle." *Yale French Studies* 38 (May 1967): 243–50.
- Detienne, Marcel. *L'invention de la mythologie*. Paris: Gallimard, 1981.
- Duchêne, R., and G. de Donville, eds. *D'un siècle à l'autre: Anciens et modernes*. Marseille: CMR 17, 1987.
- Edelstein, Dan. "Humanism, l'Esprit Philosophique, and the Encyclopédie." *The Republic of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 1.1 (May 1, 2009): <http://rofl.stanford.edu/node/27>.
- . *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Edelstein, Ludwig. *The Idea of Progress in Classical Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967.
- Elias, Norbert. *The Court Society*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Pantheon, 1983.
- Escola, Marc. *Contes de Charles Perrault*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.
- Farnham, Fern. *Madame Dacier: Scholar and Humanist*. Monterey, CA.: Angel Press, 1976.
- Feldman, Burton, and Robert D. Richardson. *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680–1860*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Ferrier-Caverivière, Nicole. *L'image de Louis XIV dans la littérature française, de 1660 à 1715*. Paris: PUF, 1981.
- Ferris, David S. *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Ferry, Luc. *Homo aestheticus*. Paris: Grasset, 1990.
- . *Le sens du beau*. Paris: Cercle d'Art, 1998.
- Finkelkraut, Alain. *Nous autres, modernes*. Paris: Ellipses, 2005.
- Foerster, Donald M. *Homer in English Criticism: The Historical Approach in the Eighteenth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947.
- Force, Pierre. *Self-interest before Adam Smith: A Genealogy of Economic Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- . "Voltaire and the Necessity of Modern History." *Modern Intellectual History* 6.3 (2009): 457–84.
- Ford, Philip. "Classical Myth and Its Interpretation in Sixteenth-Century France." In *The Classical Heritage in France*. Ed. G. Sandy. Leiden: Brill, 2002.
- . "Montaigne's Homer: Poet or Myth?" *Montaigne Studies*, 17.1–2 (2005): 7–16.
- . *De Troie à Ithaque: Réception des épopées homériques à la Renaissance*. Geneva: Droz, 2007.
- Forestier, Georges. *Essai de génétique théâtrale: Corneille à l'œuvre*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1996.
- . *Jean Racine*. Paris: Gallimard, 2006.

- Foucault, Michel. *Les mots et les choses*. Paris: Gallimard, 1966.
- . “Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur?” *Bulletin de la Société française de Philosophie* 63,3 (1969): 73–104.
- France, Peter. “Myth and Modernity: Racine’s *Phèdre*.” In *Myth and Legend in French Literature: Essays in Honor of A. J. Steele*, 93–116. Ed. K. Aspley et al. London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1982.
- Fumaroli, Marc. “Les abeilles et les araignées.” Introduction to Lecoq, *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* (see above), 7–218.
- . “Les Anciens du Nouveau Monde.” In *Montaigne et le Nouveau Monde: Actes du colloque de Paris, 18–20 mai 1992*, 21–28. Ed. Claude Blum et al. Paris: Société Internationale des Amis de Montaigne, 1994.
- . *Chateaubriand: Poésie et terreur*. Paris: Fallois, 2003.
- . “La conversation.” In *Les lieux de mémoire: III, Les France*. Ed. P. Nora. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.
- . *Héros et orateurs: Rhétorique et dramaturgie cornéliennes*. Geneva: Droz, 1990.
- . *Le poète et le roi: Jean de La Fontaine et son siècle*. Paris: Livre de poche, 1997.
- . “Le retour à l’antique.” In *Exercices de lecture, de Rabelais à Paul Valéry*, 498–531. Paris: Gallimard, 2006.
- Gaillard, Aurélia. *Fables, mythes, contes: L’esthétique de la fable et du fabuleux (1660–1724)*. Paris: Champion, 1996.
- Gay, Peter. *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, I: The Rise of Modern Paganism*. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Génetiot, Alain. *Le classicisme*. Paris: PUF, 2005.
- Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*. Paris: Seuil, 1982.
- Gilby, Emma. “Sous le signe du sublime: la rencontre de Boileau et Longin.” *PFSC* 31.61 (2004): 417–25.
- . *Sublime Worlds: Early Modern French Literature*. London: Legenda, 2006.
- Gillet, Jean. *Le Paradis perdu dans la littérature française: De Voltaire à Chateaubriand*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1975.
- Gillot, Hubert. *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes en France*. Paris: Champion, 1914.
- Gombrich, E. H. *The Preference for the Primitive*. Paris: Phaidon, 2002.
- Goodkin, Richard E. *The Tragic Middle: Racine, Aristotle, Euripides*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991.
- Goodman, Dena. *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.
- Gordon, Daniel. *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Goubert, Pierre. *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*. Trans. A. Carter. New York: Vintage, 1970.
- Gouhier, Henri. *L’anti-humanisme au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Vrin, 1987.
- Goupillaud, Ludvine. *De l’or de Virgile aux ors de Versailles: Métamorphoses de l’épopée dans la seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle en France*. Geneva: Droz, 2005.
- Grafton, Anthony. *Bring Out Your Dead*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . *Defenders of the Text: The Tradition of Scholarship in an Age of Science*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991.

- . *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- . *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Greiner, Frank, and Jean-Claude Ternaux, eds. *L'épopée et ses modèles de la Renaissance aux Lumières*. Paris: Champion, 2002.
- Grell, Chantal. *Le dix-huitième siècle et l'antiquité en France, 1680–1789*. 2 vols. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995.
- . “La querelle d’Homère et ses incidences sur la connaissance historique.” In Duchêne and Donville, *D’un siècle à l’autre* (see above).
- Grell, Chantal, and Christian Michel, eds. *Primitivisme et mythes des origines dans la France des Lumières, 1680–1820*. Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1989.
- Guion, Béatrice. “‘Une dispute honnête’: La polémique selon les Modernes.” *Littératures classiques* 59 (2006): 157–72.
- . “Un juste tempérament: Les tensions du classicisme français.” In *Histoire de la France littéraire: Classicismes*. Vol 2, 130–54. Ed. J.-C. Darmon and M. Delon. Paris: PUF, 2006.
- Gumbrecht, Hans U. *Making Sense in Life and Literature*. Trans. G. Burns. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- . *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Enquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. T. Burger and F. Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
- Habib, Claude. *Galanterie française*. Paris: Gallimard, 2006.
- Hache, Sophie. *Le langage du Ciel: Le sublime en France au XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Champion, 2000.
- Hall, Edith. *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer’s Odyssey*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
- Hall, H. G. *Richelieu’s Desmarets and the Century of Louis XIV*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Hamerton, Katharine J. “A Feminist Voice in the Enlightenment Salon: Madame de Lambert on Taste, Sensibility, and the Feminine Mind.” *Modern Intellectual History* 7, no. 2 (2010): 209–38.
- . “Women’s Taste in the French Enlightenment: From the Honnête Model to the Domestic Paradigm, 1674–1762.” Ph.D. dissertation. University of Chicago, 2001.
- Hamilton, Paul. *Historicism*. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Hammond, Nicholas. *Creative Tensions: An Introduction to Seventeenth-Century French Literature*. London: Duckwork, 1997.
- Hartmann, Pierre. *Du sublime (de Boileau à Schiller)*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 1997.
- Hartog, François. *Anciens, Modernes, Sauvages*. Paris: Galaade, 2005.
- . *Régimes d’historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps*. Paris: Seuil, 2003.
- Haskell, Francis, and Nicholas Penny. *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

- Hawcroft, Michael. *Word as Action: Racine, Rhetoric, and Theatrical Language*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- Hayes, Julie Chandler. "Of Meaning and Modernity: Anne Dacier and the Homer Debate." *EMF* 8 (2002).
- Hazard, Paul. *La crise de la conscience européenne (1680–1715)*. 1935. Paris: Fayard, 1961.
- Heath, M. *Unity in Greek Poetics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Hepp, Noémi. *Homère en France au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1968.
- . "La querelle des anciens et des modernes." In *Précis de littérature du XVIIe siècle*. Ed. J. Mesnard. Paris: PUF, 1990.
- Himmelsbach, Siegbert. *L'épopée ou la case vide: La réflexion poétologique sur l'épopée nationale en France*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988.
- Hollier, D., ed. *New History of French Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Howells, Robin. "La religion des 'chefs' dans la querelle." In Duchêne and Donville, *D'un siècle à l'autre* (see above), 53–62.
- Hughes, Robert. *The Shock of the New*. New York: Knopf, 1981.
- Hunt, J. D., and P. Willis, eds. *The Genius of Place: The English Landscape Garden, 1620–1820*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1988.
- Hutchison, Ross. *Locke in France, 1688–1734*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1991.
- Israel, Jonathan I. *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Jacob, Margaret. *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006.
- Jauss, H. R. "La 'modernité' dans la tradition littéraire." In *Pour une esthétique de la réception*, 158–209. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.
- Jones, Peter. *Hume's Sentiment: Their Ciceronian and French Context*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982.
- Jones, Richard Foster. *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in 17th-Century England*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965.
- . "The Background of the Battle of the Books." *Washington University Studies* 7.2 (April 1920): 99–161.
- Kelley, Donald R. *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Knight, R.-C. *Racine et la Grèce*. Paris: Boivin [n.d., c. 1950].
- Kortum Hans. *Charles Perrault und Nicholas Boileau*. Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1966.
- Kristeller, Paul Oskar. "The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics." Part 1, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 12.3 (Oct. 1951): 496–527; part 2, *ibid.* 13.1 (Jan. 1952): 17–46.
- Lanson, Gustave. *Essais de méthode, de critique et d'histoire littéraire*. Ed. H. Peyre. Paris: Hachette, 1965.
- Lavocat, Françoise. *La syrinx au bûcher: Pan et les satyres à la Renaissance et à l'âge baroque*. Geneva: Droz, 2005.
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel. *The Ancien Régime: A History of France, 1610–1774*. Trans. M. Greengrass. London: Blackwell, 1991.
- . *Saint-Simon, ou Le système de la Cour*. Paris: Fayard, 1997.

- Lestringant, Frank. "Exotisme." In *Dictionnaire de Michel de Montaigne*, 375–77. Ed. P. Desan. Paris: Champion, 2004.
- . *Le Huguenot et le Sauvage*. Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, 1990.
- Létoublon, F., and C. Volpilhac-Augier, eds. *Homère en France après la Querelle*. Paris: Champion, 1999.
- Levine, Joseph M. *The Autonomy of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- . *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- . *Between the Ancients and the Moderns: Baroque Culture in Restoration England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology*. Trans. Monique Layton. 1976. Repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- Litman, Théodore A. *Le sublime en France (1660–1714)*. Paris: Nizet, 1971.
- Loewenstein, Joseph. "Humanism and Seventeenth-Century English Literature." In *Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, 269–93. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Lovejoy, Arthur, and George Boas. *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935.
- Lowenthal, David. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Lyons, John D. "The Ancients' Ironic Nostalgia." *Muse* 29.1 (March 2006): 94–107.
- . "The Barbarous Ancients: French Classical Poetics and the Attack on Ancient Poetry." *Modern Language Notes* 110.5 (1995): 1135–47.
- . *Kingdom of Disorder: The Theory of Tragedy in Classical France*. Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999.
- . *The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *L'inhumain: Causeries sur le temps*. Paris: Galilée, 1988.
- . *Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*. Paris: Galilée, 1986.
- Magné, Bernard. *Crise de la littérature française sous Louis XIV: Humanisme et nationalisme*. 2 vols. Lille: 1976.
- Manuel, Frank E. *The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods*. Cambridge: Harvard, 1959.
- Marchal, Roger. *Fontenelle à l'aube des Lumières*. Paris: Champion, 1997.
- Marin, Louis. *De la représentation*. Paris: Gallimard, 1994.
- . "Le sublime dans les années 1670: Un je-ne-sais-quoi?" In *Sublime Poussin*, 209–22. Paris: Seuil, 1995.
- . *Philippe de Champaigne, ou La présence cachée*. Paris: Hazan, 1995.
- . *Portrait of the King*. Trans. M. Houle. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988. Originally published as *Le Portrait du roi*. Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1981.
- . *To Destroy Painting*. Trans. Mette Hjort. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Originally published as *Détruire la peinture*. Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1977.
- Marks, Emerson R. *The Poetics of Reason: English Neoclassical Criticism*. New York: Random House, 1968.
- Martin, Christophe. "Fontenelle autour de 1700, ou 'Les étranges productions de l'esprit humain.'" In *L'Année 1700: Actes du colloque du Centre de recherches sur le XVIIe siècle*

- européen (1600–1700), 110–26. Ed. A. Gaillard. Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17, no. 154), 2004.
- Martin, Henri-Jean. *Livre, pouvoirs, et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle (1598–1701)*. 2 vols. Geneva: Droz, 1969.
- Maskell, David. *The Historical Epic in France, 1500–1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Mason, H. A. *To Homer through Pope: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad and Pope's Translation*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1972.
- Mazon, Paul. *Madame Dacier et les traductions d'Homère en France*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936.
- Meinecke, Friedrich. *Historicism: The Rise of a New Historical Outlook*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1972.
- Meltzer, Françoise. *Hot Property: The Stakes and Claims of Literary Originality*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994.
- Menant, Sylvain. *La chute d'Icare: La crise de la poésie française, 1700–1750*. Paris and Geneva: Droz, 1981.
- Merlin-Kajman, Hélène. *Public et littérature en France au XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1994.
- . “Un siècle classico-baroque?” *XVIIe siècle* 223 (April–June 2004): 163–72.
- Meschonnic, Henri. *Modernité modernité*. Paris: Gallimard, 1988.
- Moine, Marie-Christine. *Les fêtes à la cour du Roi-Soleil*. Paris: Lanore/Sorlot, 1984.
- Moriarty, Michael. *Taste and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century France*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Morrissey, Robert. *L'empereur à la barbe fleurie: Charlemagne dans la mythologie et l'histoire de France*. Paris: Gallimard, 1997.
- . *Napoléon et l'héritage de la gloire*. Paris: PUF, 2010.
- Murrin, Michael. *The Allegorical Epic: Essays in Its Rise and Decline*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Néraudau, Jean-Pierre. *L'Olympe du Roi-Soleil: Mythologie et idéologie royale au Grand Siècle*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1986.
- Netz, Robert. *Histoire de la censure dans l'édition*. Paris, PUF, 1997.
- New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Ed. A. Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Niderst, Alain. *Fontenelle à la recherche de lui-même (1657–1702)*. Paris: Nizet, 1972.
- , ed. *Fontenelle: Actes du colloque tenu à Rouen du 6 au 10 octobre 1987*. Paris: PUF, 1989.
- Norman, Larry F. “Fontenelle, Montaigne et les Anciens du Nouveau Monde.” *Montaigne Studies* 19 (2007): 185–98.
- . “Historiciser le sublime, ou Le classicisme entre modernité et antiquité.” *Revue d'histoire littéraire en France*, April–June (no 2) 2007: 347–57.
- . “Homère entre anciens et modernes.” *Lalies: langue et littérature* 25 (2005): 59–110.
- . “Homère transplanté: Luxuriance antique ou classicisme moderne?” In *Révolutions homériques*, 83–98. Ed. G. Most, L. Norman, and S. Rabau. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2009.

- . "Playing with Fire: Iphigenia in Versailles." In *Cérémonies et ritualisations*, 267–79. Ed. D. Wetsel. Berlin: Weidler-Verlag ("Romanice"), 2003.
- . "Racine's 'Other Eye': History, Nature and Decorum from Ancient to Modern." In *Racine et/ou le classicisme*, 139–51. Ed. R. Tobin. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17, no. 129), 2001.
- . "Was Molière a Modern?" In *Theatre, Fiction, and Poetry in the French Long Seventeenth Century*, 233–46. Ed. R. Zaiser and W. Brooks. Peter Lang, 2007.
- Pagden, Anthony. *European Encounters with the New World*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- . *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Patey, Douglas Lane. "Ancients and Moderns." In *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4. Ed. H. B. Nisbet and C. Raswon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Pavel, Thomas. *L'art de l'éloignement: Essai sur l'imagination classique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1996.
- . *La pensée du roman*. Paris: Gallimard, 2003.
- Peyrache-Leborgne, Dominique. *La poétique du sublime de la fin des Lumières au romantisme*. Paris: Champion, 1997.
- Pocock, J. G. A. *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 1: *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Popkin, Richard H. *The History of Scepticism from Savonarola to Bayle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Poulouin, Claudine. *Le temps des origines*. Paris, Champion, 1998.
- Rabau, Sophie. "L'auctofiction ou la peur de l'anonyme: L'invention de l'auteur grec antique." *Constructions* 6 (1991): 1–18.
- . "Homère entre allégorie et fiction." In *Allégorie et fiction*. Ed. F. Lavocat. (Peeters, forthcoming).
- . "Portrait d'Homère en lecteur moderne: Houdar de la Motte et Marivaux." In *Révolutions homériques*, 69–82. Ed. G. Most, L. Norman, and S. Rabau. Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2009.
- Racault, J. M. "Homère aux Amériques." In Létoublon and Volpillac-Augier, *Homère après la Querelle* (see above), 149–59.
- Redford, Bruce. *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England*. Los Angeles: Getty, 2008.
- Reill, Peter H. *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.
- Reiss, Timothy J. *The Meaning of Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Reynolds, L. D., and N. G. Wilson. *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*. 3rd Ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Rigault, Hippolyte. *Histoire de la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*. Paris, 1856.
- Riggs, Larry. *Molière and Modernity: Absent Mothers and Masculine Births*. Charlottesville: Rockwood Press, 2005.
- Rohou, Jean. *Jean Racine, bilan critique*. Paris: Nathan, 1994.
- Rosenheim, Edward W. Jr. *Swift and the Satirist's Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.

- Roulin, Jean-Marie. *L'épopée de Voltaire à Chateaubriand: Poésie, histoire et politique*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2005.
- Rubel, Margaret Mary. *Savage and Barbarian: Historical Attitudes in the Criticism of Homer and Ossian in Britain, 1760–1800*. Amsterdam: North Holland Publ., 1978.
- Rule, John C. "The Administrative History of the Reign." In *The Reign of Louis XIV*. Ed. P. Sonnino. Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1991.
- Russo, Elena. *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
- Saint Girons, Baldine. *Esthétiques du XVIIIe siècle*. Paris: Philippe Sers, 1990.
- . *Fiat Lux: Une philosophie du sublime*. Paris: Quai Voltaire, 1993.
- Schiffman, Zachary S. *On the Threshold of Modernity: Relativism in the French Renaissance*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991.
- Schnapp, Alain. *La conquête du passé: Aux origines de l'archéologie*. Paris: Ed. Carré (Livre de poche), 1993.
- Scholar, Richard. *The Je-ne-sais-quoi in Early Modern Europe: Encounters with a Certain Something*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Schröder, Volker. *La tragédie du sang d'Auguste: Politique et intertextualité dans "Britannicus"*. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag (Biblio 17, no. 119), 1999.
- Scodel, Joshua. "Seventeenth-Century English Literary Criticism: Classical Values, English Texts and Contexts." In *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 3: *The Renaissance*. Ed. H. B. Nisbet and C. Raswon. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Seidel, Michael. "Systems Satire: Swift.com." In *The Cambridge History of English Literature: 1660–1780*. Ed. J. Richeti. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Sermain, Jean-Paul. *Le conte de fées du classicisme aux Lumières*. Paris: Desjonquères, 2005.
- . "Les modèles classiques: Aux origines d'une ambiguïté, et de ses effets." *XVIIIe siècle* 223 (April–June 2004): 173–81.
- Settis, Salvatore. *The Future of the "Classical"*. Trans. A. Cameron. Malden, MA: Polity, 2006.
- Seznec, Jean. *Essais sur Diderot et l'Antiquité*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.
- . *La survivance des dieux antiques: Essais sur le rôle de la tradition mythologique dans l'humanisme et dans l'art de la Renaissance*. London: Warburg Institute, 1940.
- Shank, J. B. *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Shankman, Steven. *Pope's Iliad: Homer in the Age of Passion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Simonsuuri, Kirsti. *Homer's Original Genius: Eighteenth-Century Notions of the Early Greek Epic (1688–1798)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- Snow, C. P. *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960.
- Soriano, Marc. *Les contes de Perrault: Culture savante et traditions populaires*. Paris: Gallimard, 1977.
- Spitzer, Leo. *Essays on Seventeenth-Century French Literature*. Trans. D. Bellos. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Starobinski, Jean. *Le remède dans le mal: Critique et légitimation de l'artifice à l'âge des Lumières*. Paris: Gallimard, 1989.

- Stegmann, André. *L'héroïsme cornélien, genèse et signification*. 2 vols. Paris: A. Colin, 1968.
- Stenzel, Hartmut. "Espace public et naissance d'un esprit critique." In *Diversité, c'est ma devise: Festschrift für Jürgen Grimm*. Paris: Biblio 17 (86), 1994.
- Stern, B. H. *The Rise of Romantic Hellenism in English Literature, 1732–1786*. Menasha, WI: George Banta, 1940.
- Stuurman, Siep. *François Poulain de la Barre and the Invention of Modern Equality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Thirouin, Laurent. *L'aveuglement salutaire: Le réquisitoire contre le théâtre dans la France classique*. Paris: Champion, 1997.
- Thomas, Downing A. *Aesthetics of Opera in the Ancien Régime, 1647–1785*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- . *Music and the Origins of Language: Theories from the French Enlightenment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Tobin, Ronald W. *Racine and Seneca*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *Nous et les autres: La réflexion française sur la diversité humaine*. Paris: Seuil, 1989.
- Trottein, S., ed. *L'esthétique naît-elle au XVIIIe siècle?* Paris: PUF, 2000.
- Valéry, Paul. *Œuvres*. Ed. J. Hytier. 2 vols. Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1957.
- Van Doren, Charles. *The Idea of Progress*. New York: Praeger, 1967.
- Van Elslande, Jean-Pierre. "Molière ou le moraliste à la fête." *PFSC* 27.53 (2000): 363–74.
- . "Du roi joueur au roi joué: *Les plaisirs de l'île enchantée* de 1664." In *Désordres du jeu / poétiques ludiques*. Geneva: Droz, 1994.
- Van Tieghem, Paul. *Ossian en France*. Paris: Rieder, 1917.
- Vasoli, C. "La première querelle des 'Anciens' et des 'Modernes' aux origines de la Renaissance." In *Classical Influences on European Culture, A.D. 1500–1700*. Ed. R. R. Bolgar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- Veyne, Paul. *Les Grecs ont-ils cru à leurs mythes?* Paris: Seuil, 1983.
- Viala, Alain. *La France galante: Essai historique sur une catégorie culturelle, de ses origines jusqu'à la Révolution*. Paris: PUF, 2008.
- . Introduction to *L'esthétique galante: "Discours sur les œuvres de Monsieur Sarasin,"* by Paul Pellisson-Fontanier. Toulouse: Société de littératures classiques, 1989.
- . *Naissance de l'écrivain: Sociologie de la littérature à l'âge classique*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1985.
- . "Racine galant ou l'amour au pied de la lettre." *Cahiers de la Comédie Française* 17 (1995): 30–34.
- Violet, Michèle. "Cohérence et fonction-auteur: Les *Conjectures académiques* de l'abbé d'Aubignac." In *Alteratives*, 203–14. Ed. Warren Motte and Gerald Prince. Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1999.
- Vyverberg, Henry. *Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Walton, Guy. *Louis XIV's Versailles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Weinbrot, Howard. *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

- White, Hayden. "The Irrational and the Problem of Historical Knowledge in the Enlightenment." In *Irrationalism in the Eighteenth Century*, 303–21. Ed. H. E. Pagliaro. Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972.
- Whitney, Lois. "Studies in Eighteenth Century Primitivistic Theories of Epic Origins." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1921.
- Winckelmann et le retour à l'antique: *Actes du colloque, 9 au 12 juin 1994*. Nantes: Université de Nantes, 1995.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader: First Series*. New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1984.
- Yilmaz, Levent. *Le temps moderne: Variations sur les Anciens et les contemporains*. Paris: Gallimard, 2004.
- Zoberman, Pierre. *Les cérémonies de la parole: L'éloquence d'apparat en France dans le dernier quart du XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Champion, 1998.
- Zuber, Roger. *Les "belles infidèles" et la formation du goût classique*. 1968. Paris: Albin Michel, 1995.
- . *Les émerveillements de la raison: Classicismes littéraires du XVIIe siècle français*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1997.
- . "Libertinage et humanisme: Une rencontre difficile." *XVIIe siècle* 127 (1980): 163–80.

Index

Italicized page numbers refer to figures.

- Abramovici, Jean-Christophe, 246n25
academies: Académie Française, 13, 72, 94, 242n3; proliferation of under Louis XIV, 94
Addison, Joseph, 5, 8, 198, 216–18
Aesop, 180, 181–82
aesthetics: philosophy of and its development, 6, 8, 159, 197–99, 215–23, 226, 249n2; quarrel, as central to, 8; as sensorial and affective experience, 2–5, 8, 159, 196–205, 216–18. *See also* empiricism; senses and the sensorial
Alexander (the Great), 21, 38, 95, 100, 119, 124, 143, 246n2
allegory: humanist tradition of, 180; of pagan myth, 68, 103, 147–48; political implications of, 95–97; rationalist critique of, 180–83; sublime, distinct from, 186–89, 192
Amerindians: compared to ancient Europeans, 25, 37–39, 86, 108, 109–11, 201, 234n1; as future “moderns,” 20; and study of mythology, 110
antiquity: brutality of, 77–78, 85–88, 101, 113–30, 154, 190, 218–20, 225–26; as “counterculture,” 136–49; foreignness of, 1–3, 8, 14–15, 17–21, 31–33, 35–40, 81, 86–88, 95–98, 132–36, 166–71, 201, 218–23; “Greco-Roman” civilization of
disaggregated, 21–22, 27–28, 60–61; historical evolution within, 4, 6–7, 12, 13, 16, 21–28; 59–62; puerility of, 22, 24–25, 44, 64–67, 107–12, 154, 171–74; republicanism in (*see* monarchy); sacred and secular compared, 67–69, 142, 144–49, 181; as unknowable, 17–18, 166–68. *See also* Greek (language, ancient); Latin (language); paganism; quarrel of the ancients and moderns
Apelles, 161
Apostolidès, Jean-Marie, 240n6, 241n12–14
Aristotle: and neo-Aristotelian conservatism, 26, 46; as philosopher, 23, 79, 90, 156; poetics of, 4, 36, 119, 174, 186, 206–7, 209, 210, 226; on tragic pathos, 176
Arnould, Antoine, 246n24
arts. *See* aesthetics; autonomy of literature and the arts; visual arts
Athens (ancient): its classical age as “modern,” 21, 225; compared to modern Paris, 29; foreignness of, 15; political readings of, 89, 90, 225–26
Aubignac, François-Hédelin (abbé d’): on Homer, 68, 146, 163–65, 181, 223; quarrel, impact on, 244n6
Auerbach, Erich, 29
Augustus: age (Augustan), 22–23, 26, 45, 59–60, 124, 214, 228n13; compared to

- Augustus (*continued*)
 Louis XIV, 23, 59, 95, 102, 143; Corneille's depiction of, 252n24
 authority: and aesthetics, 202–4; of antiquity contested, 1–2, 7, 13–14, 44–45, 47, 63–66, 74, 78–81, 179, 202; political, 67, 73–74 (*see also* monarchy); religious, 67–69 (*see also* Bible, Hebrew; paganism); scholarly, 67, 69–73
 autonomy of literature and the arts: claims against, 153–59, 223–26; claims for, 4, 6, 8, 53, 87, 131–32, 146–49, 186, 205–7, 211–12, 218–23
- Bacon, Francis: on allegory, 181; on authority of ancients, 1, 65
 Baillet, Adrien, 236n3
 Banier, Antoine, 243n20
 Baron, Hans, 227n6
 Barthes, Roland, 8
 Bayle, Pierre, 42, 44, 117
 Bentley, Richard, 36, 71
 Berlin, Isaiah, 30–31
 Beugnot, Bernard, 253n1
 Bible, Hebrew, 68–69, 142, 144–46, 181, 189–90, 196
 Blackwell, Thomas, 220–21, 222, 223
 Boas, George, 137
 Boch, Julie, 237n6, 241n1, 252n30
 Bodin, Jean, 230n33
 Boileau-Despréaux [Boileau, Nicolas]: on allegory, 103, 147–48, 186–89; as Ancient partisan, 12, 13, 15–16, 214, 244n9, 250n8; on autonomy of poetry, 157–58, 205, 212, 222–23; conflicted position of and admiration for modernity, 15–16, 26, 46–49, 71–72; and feminism, 129–30, 138–39; on gallantry, 120, 137–40, 245n14; historicizing attitude of, 32, 59–62, 64, 140, 209; innovation of, 186, 198–99, 253n1, 256n30, 257n32; paganism, appreciation of, 102–3, 147–48, 255n20; political attitude of, 140–41; on sublime, 4–5, 26, 48, 71–72, 102, 185–96, 204, 216, 217, 226; on translation, 71–72, 190–92
 Boivin, Jean: as Ancient partisan, 72, 214, 232n4; historicizing attitude of, 32–33, 131–32, 135–36, 220; on Homer, 62, 131–32, 149, 218, 256n25; on paganism, 148–49, 222; political attitude of, 143–44; on realism, 208–12, 258n49; on translation, 255n16
 Borgerhoff, E. B. O., 33, 249n4, 253n1
 Bossuet, Jacques Bénigne: on ancient liberty, 248n13; on paganism, 100–101, 106
 Bouhours, Dominique, 190
 Boyle, Robert, 233n23
 Briggs, Robin, 240n5–7
 Britain, role in quarrel, 8, 13, 213–18, 220–21, 228n13, 231n36, 233n23
 Brody, Jules, 253n1, 256n29
 Buffon, Georges-Louis Leclerc (comte de), 95
 Burke, Edmund, 198
 Burke, Peter, 240n9, 241n12–15, 241n2
 Bury, Emmanuel, 232n3, 241n1, 242n10
 Bury, J. B., 227n5
 Buxton, John, 229n28
- Caesar, Julius, 38
 Call, Michael, 245n14
 Callières, François de, 227n4
 Cartesianism: Boileau's attitude to, 5, 46–47; empiricism opposed to, 5–6, 43, 46, 215, 218; and feminism, 128; method, 42–45, 54, 56, 154–55, 192 (*see also* geometric method); and Moderns, 5–6, 40, 42–45, 46, 79; political implications of, 92–93; and religious thought, 92–93, 99, 106, 108. *See also* Descartes, René; empiricism; rationalism
 Cassirer, Ernst, 44, 231n41
 Castiglione, Baldassare, 119
 catharsis. *See* pathos, tragic
 Catullus, 239n3
 Cave, Terence, 63, 234n3
 Cecilius, 60
 censorship, 73–74, 86–88, 90, 111–12, 130, 223, 225–26
 Cervantes, Miguel de, 173
 Chantalat, Claude, 257n35
 Chapelain, Jean, 25, 36, 176
 Chartier, Roger, 241n19
 Chateaubriand, François-Auguste-René de, 39, 58, 89

- Chénier, André, 48–49, 242n8
 childhood, attitudes toward. *See* antiquity:
 puerility of; fairy tales (*contes*)
 Chrysippus of Soli, 252n34
 Cicero: as critic of Greeks, 19; crudeness
 of writings, 78; as “modern,” 22, 24,
 55, 58; as orator and philosopher, 58,
 90, 201
 Clark, A. F. B., 259n3
 Clarke, G. W., 229n28
 classicism: concision and obscurity rec-
 onciled in, 188, 189–90; distinct from
 antiquity, 3–4, 11, 194–95; foreign-
 ness of, 8; Greek and Roman influences
 on in conflict, 27–28; historicism and,
 6–7, 29–33; order and disorder in, 186,
 194–99; propriety and, 246n25; roman-
 ticism and, 8
 Clement of Alexandria, 146
 Coirault, Yves, 248n14
 Colbert, Jean Baptiste, 73, 93–94, 241n16
 Compagnon, Antoine, 237n3
 Constant, Benjamin, 89
 Coras, Jacques de, 258n45
 Corneille, Pierre: “admiration,” his con-
 ception of, 62, 236n16; and decorum
 and didacticism, 130, 177–78, 205; on
 the ineffable, 254n11; paganism and
 Christianity in, 103, 105, 106; “querelle
 du *Cid*,” 72; sublimity of, 189
 Cortez, Hernando, 38, 234n1
 Couton, Georges, 241n19, 252n30
 Croce, Benedetto, 249n2
 Cronk, Nicholas, 253n1, 254n9, 256n29
 Culpin, D. J., 240n3
 Curtius, Ernst Robert, 20, 154, 228n6
 208, 210–12, 259n51, 259n54–55; and the
 sublime, 5
 Dagen, Jean, 232n9, 233n22, 237n8, 241n1
 Dandrey, Patrick, 240n9, 242n3
 Davies, Simon, 249n2
 decorum, 1–3, 8; Ancient partisans’ cri-
 tique of, 132–33, 205, 206–10, 215; Mod-
 ern partisans’ conception of, 175–76.
See also didacticism and exemplarity of
 literature; realism of ancient literature
 DeJean, Joan, 128, 228n7, 231n37, 237n4,
 241n2, 242n9, 246n25
 Demosthenes, 55, 58, 228n14, 233n18
 Denis, Delphine, 245n10
 Desan, Philippe, 232n8
 Descartes, René, 1, 11, 92, 93; as champion
 of modernity, 23, 25, 43–44, 46, 56, 60,
 79, 156, 162; on order, 165; poetry, ac-
 cused of destroying, 157–58; on pueril-
 ity of ancients, 65. *See also* Cartesianism
 Desmarests de Saint-Sorlin, Jean: antipa-
 ganism and Christianity of, 67, 100–
 103, 104, 106, 146, 225, 229n22, 256n20;
 Christian epic poetry of, 147, 251n22;
 political attitude of, 96, 100–101, 241n11
 Detienne, Marcel, 110
 didacticism and exemplarity of literature:
 embraced by Modern partisans, 85–89,
 174–83, 225–26; critiqued by Ancient
 partisans, 87, 188, 204–12, 217–18,
 221–22
 Diderot, Denis, 8, 12, 221–22, 239n4
 Dryden, John, 259n2
 Du Bos, abbé, 5, 202, 219
 Dupuis, Charles-François, 243n20
 Edelstein, Dan, 231n40, 248n13
 Edelstein, Ludwig, 228n6
 Elias, Norbert, 120
 eloquence: in antiquity, 22, 53–54, 57–58,
 60, 153–55; concept of, 57
 empiricism: Ancient party’s use of, 5–6,
 18–19, 43, 46; opposed to rationalism,
 156, 201–4, 215–20, 222. *See also* aes-
 thetics: as sensorial and affective experi-
 ence; senses and the sensorial
 Enlightenment, the: and “death of poetry,”
 158–59; historicism and cosmopolitan-

- Enlightenment, the (*continued*)
 ism of, 30, 33, 106; political thought of, 33, 58, 89–90, 94, 143–44, 248n13; primitivism in, 139, 219–22; quarrel's impact on, 5–6, 14, 100, 117, 143–44, 198, 213–14, 219–26, 243n20
- epic, as genre, 55–57, 60, 179, 180–81. *See also* Homer; Virgil
- Escal, Françoise, 247n5
- Escola, Marc, 243n16
- ethnology, 37, 39–40. *See also* Amerindians; pluralism, cultural and historical
- Euclid, 156, 157, 222
- Euripides: as classical model, 29, 58; modern adaptations of (“querelle d’*Alceste*”), 71, 73, 88, 114, 127–28, 186, 251n21
- Eustathius of Thessalonica, 180
- Faguet, Emile, 258n44
- fairytale tales (*contes*): and childhood, concept of, 172; modernity of, 56, 57; pagan myths, compared to, 107, 111
- Feldman, Burton, 243n19
- Félibien, André, 249n6
- feminism: Ancient partisans’ approach to, 129, 138–39; Modern partisans’ approach to, 127–30
- Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe: as Ancient partisan, 12, 222–23; on Homer, 77, 187, 199, 210–12, 218; modern Christianity of, 117, 179; political attitude of, 141, 226
- Ferrier-Caverivière, Nicole, 233n19, 238n16, 240n7, 240n11, 241n15, 241n17–18, 241n20, 247n11
- Ferris, David S., 229n28
- Ferry, Luc, 237n12
- Finkelkraut, Alain, 228n7
- Flaubert, Gustave, 173
- Fontenelle, Bernard Le Bovier de: on allegory, 181–82; conflicted position of and admiration for antiquity, 16, 45–46, 48–49; and feminism, 246n21; historical self-consciousness of, 20, 48; historicizing attitude of, 22, 24–26, 28, 40–47, 53–59, 65–67, 81, 234n1; as Modern partisan, 12, 47, 98, 118, 244n9; on paganism and religion, 22, 38–39, 69, 97, 99, 108–12, 113, 242n12; on pastoral, 122, 175–76, 239n7; rationalism of, 4, 42–45, 55–56, 155, 162, 173–74
- Ford, Philip, 229n17, 252n33
- Forestier, Georges, 252n23, 258n41, 258n45
- Fréret, Nicolas, 243n20
- Fumaroli, Marc, 228n7, 229n28, 231n37, 232n8, 238n16, 240n9, 241n18, 241n2, 242n6, 242n9, 244n7, 247n11, 251n23, 253n1, 257n30, 260n14
- Furetière, Antoine, 239n12, 250n9
- Gaillard, Aurélia, 237n6, 248n16, 248n19, 252n30
- Galileo, 11, 40
- gallantry: Ancient party critique of, 120, 129–30, 137–40; literary forms of, 56, 173–74; as modern moral code, 85–86, 113, 120–30. *See also* feminism; sociability
- gardens and landscape: as metaphor for creative imagination, 185, 215–18, 220; rusticity of Homer’s, 32, 224. *See also* Versailles
- Gassendi, Pierre, 60, 233n23
- Gay, Peter, 100
- Geertz, Clifford, 29–30
- Génétiot, Alain, 253n1
- geometric method: Ancient partisans’ critique of, 157–58, 189, 191–96, 222; historicization of, 42–45, 161; literature and arts, applied to, 51–52, 116, 155–66, 180–83. *See also* Cartesianism; empiricism; rationalism
- Gilby, Emma, 253n1, 254n11, 257n32
- Gillot, Hubert, 242n3
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 230n32
- Gombrich, E. H., 247n9
- Goodman, Dena, 244n7
- Gordon, Daniel, 244n7
- Goubert, Pierre, 240n5, 240n10
- Grafton, Anthony, 36, 234n7
- Greece. *See* antiquity; Athens; Greek (language, ancient); paganism
- Greek (language, ancient): obscurity of, 17–18, 166–68, 170; poetic superiority of, 27, 190–91
- Grell, Chantal, 33, 229n28

- Guion, Béatrice, 237n10
Gumbrecht, Hans U., 33
- Habermas, Jürgen, 238n15
Habib, Claude, 245n14
Hache, Sophie, 253n1
Hall, Edith, 244n8
Hall, H. G., 241n18, 241n2
Hammond, Nicholas, 230n29
Hardouin, (père) Jean, 248n20
Hartmann, Pierre, 256n28
Hartog, François, 37, 95–96, 228n6, 235n14, 237n4, 240n1
Harvey, William, 26, 40
Hayes, Julie Chandler, 257n31
Hazard, Paul, 158, 229n29
Hepp, Noémi, 33, 233n19, 239n7, 256n29, 259n5
Herculaneum, 28
Herder, Johann Gottfried, 33, 36, 230n32
historical sensibility: toward antiquity, 1–3, 14–15, 21–33, 62, 85–86; and rise of historicism, 29–33, 35–40; role in quarrel of, 6–8, 11–12, 14–15, 39–40; self-conscious reflections on, 16–21, 48–49, 128; universalism, in tension with, 28–33, 83–87. *See also* pluralism, cultural and historical; presentism; progress
Hobbes, Thomas, 90–91, 98, 135
Homer, 61, 233n18: Achilles, as epitome of ancient vices, 78, 83, 89–91, 114–16, 119, 141–42, 145, 179, 207–9, 226, 244n8, 251n22, 258n48; allegorical readings of, 147–48, 180–83, 187; authorship of epics examined, 163–64, 219–20, 223, 224; canonical status of, 4–5, 52, 69, 70–71, 202–3; gardens in, 32, 216, 224 (*see also* gardens and landscape); Hebrew prophets, compared to, 68–69, 142, 144–46; immorality and indecency of, 1–3, 82–83, 84–85, 114–17, 176, 179, 182–83; paganism of, 68–69, 99–100, 106–7, 142, 144–46, 149, 225; Plato's critique of, 19, 23, 88, 118–19, 157, 181, 206, 226; poetic irregularity of, 1–4, 27, 36, 153–54, 156–58, 163–64, 182–83, 185, 196, 213–15; political readings of, 89–91, 97–98, 141–45; primitiveness of, 1–3, 5, 8, 21, 22, 26–28, 32–33, 37–39, 54–56, 58, 62, 77–79, 83–84, 137, 139, 154, 173–74, 219–21; 247n3; quarrel, at center of, 13, 21, 22–23, 28, 70–71; realism of, 132, 187, 208–12; remoteness of, 18, 32; sublimity of, 8, 27, 48, 62, 185, 190, 192, 194–97, 213–22
homosexuality, 74
Horace, 174, 179, 186, 209, 239n3
Houdar de La Motte, Antoine. *See* La Motte
Howells, Robin, 240n4
Huet, Pierre-Daniel, 247n11: on allegory, 237n6; and empiricism, 233n23, 257n36; historicizing attitude of, 228n9; religious thought of, 146
humanism. *See* Renaissance: and humanism
Hume, David: empiricism of, 19, 202, 222; on gallantry and sociability, 120–22, 123, 124, 126; and historicism, 33, 103, 106; quarrel, relation to, 12, 120, 222
Hutcheson, Francis, 202
- Iroquois, 39, 86, 109, 201. *See also* Amerindians
Israel, Jonathan I., 229n29, 233n19, 233n23, 257n36
- Jacob, Margaret, 240n6
Jauss, H. R., 20, 36, 229n19
Joan of Arc, 139, 176
Johnson, Samuel, 259n6
Jones, Peter, 244n9
Jones, Richard Foster, 227n5
Jonson, Ben, 259n2
Juvenal, 129
- Kant, Immanuel, 65, 198
Kelley, Donald R., 232n2
- La Bruyère, Jean de: as Ancient partisan, 12; on Corneille, 251n23; on foreignness of antiquity, 15, 30–31, 39; historical self-consciousness of, 19–20, 48, 62; political attitude of, 141
La Fayette, Madame de, 56, 197
Lafitau, Joseph-François, 230n32, 232n13

- La Fontaine, Jean de, 141
- La Mothe Le Vayer, François de, 117, 133
- La Motte, Antoine Houdar de, 238n1; on allegory, 253n38, 253n3; and didacticism, 178, 207; on Homer, 23, 84–85, 99, 107, 114–16, 183, 223, 224, 235n15, 244n8, 247n3, 253n38; on immorality of ancients, 118–19, 176, 223, 226; on paganism, 99–100, 101, 107, 112, 115–16, 149, 259n54; political attitude of, 97–98; rationalist poetics of, 156–57, 165–66, 173, 251n16
- Lang, Andrew, 110
- language, materiality and orality of, 160, 162, 170–71, 190–92, 224. *See also* Greek (language, ancient); Latin (language); translation
- Lanson, Gustave, 249n2
- La Reynie, Gabriel-Nicolas de, 238n17
- La Rochefoucauld, François (duc de), 133
- Latin (language): as dead language, 17–18, 166–68, 170; diction, high and low, in, 190; (neo-), mocked by Ancient and Modern partisans, 71–72, 101, 127; poetically inferior to Greek, 27; rivalry with French, 101
- Le Bossu, (père) René: on allegory and epic, 180–82, 183, 187; arts and sciences differentiated by, 52–54
- Le Brun, Charles, 170
- Le Clerc, Michel, 258n45
- Le Laboureur, Louis, 241n3
- Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel, 240n7, 244n7
- Lestringant, Frank, 232n8
- Levine, Joseph M., 31, 228n8, 228n13, 232n5, 236n1
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude, 37
- literature, definition of, 57. *See also* aesthetics; autonomy of literature and the arts; progress: of literary genres
- Litman, Théodore A., 253n1
- Locke, John, 5, 156, 215, 216, 219, 233n23
- Longepierre, Hilaire-Bernard de: as Ancient partisan, 13, 198; arts and sciences differentiated by, 40, 54; on autonomy of poetry, 153–54, 212, 218, 222–23; on eloquence, 57; empiricism of (on aesthetic experience), 3, 5, 72, 18–19, 200–204; on Homer, 26–28, 32–33, 196, 224; political attitude of, 141, 153, 240n11; on realism, 208–9, 210, 212; on remoteness of antiquity, 17–18, 26–28, 31–33, 146, 220; on sublime, 87, 196, 200–1, 216; on tolerance of historical and cultural difference, 28, 32–33, 62, 78, 132–35, 228n11; and translation, 73, 85, 191–92
- Longinus (pseudo-): Homer, views on, 192–93; praise of irregularity by, 193–94; renovation of, 198, 215–16; translated by Boileau, 4, 26, 71–72, 185–86, 188–91, 192–93. *See also* sublime, the
- Louis XIV: age of, 1, 6, 20, 22, 25, 29, 35, 73–74, 85, 100–101, 119, 257n30; compared to Augustus, 23, 59–60, 95, 102, 142–43, 228n13; compared to Homer's heroes, 247n6; compared to Nero, 142–43; as modernizing monarch, 42, 48, 91–96, 106; quarrel, regime's role in, 73–74, 91–98, 102, 140–41, 153. *See also* monarchy
- Lovejoy, Arthur, 137
- Lucian, 24, 46
- Lully, Jean-Baptiste, 114
- Lycurgus, 93
- Lyons, John D., 242n7, 251n19, 259n50
- Lyotard, Jean-François, 256n30, 257n32
- Lysippus, 143
- Malebranche, Nicolas de, 99, 106
- Malherbe, François de, 25, 47
- Marin, Louis, 253n1, 254n11, 256n28
- Martin, Christophe, 233n22
- Martin, Henri-Jean, 238n17, 241n16
- Marx, Karl, 58, 89
- Mazon, Paul, 237n10
- Meinecke, Friedrich, 230n32
- Menander, 27
- Menant, Sylvain, 249n2
- Merlin-Kajman, Hélène, 230n29, 238n14–15
- Michelet, Jules, 33
- Middle Ages, the, 37; as forerunner to the quarrel, 13; as “modern antiquity,” 25; as period of regression, 21, 35–36, 41, 45, 246n25
- Mignard, Pierre, 211
- modern, the: Ancient party as motor for,

- 198, 256n30, 257n31–32; concept of, 6–7, 13–17, 19–20, 33, 35–36, 42–45, 47–49, 198; existing within antiquity, 21–25; French identity of, 168. *See also* antiquity; historical sensibility; presentism; quarrel of the ancients and moderns
- Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin): on ancients in *Le Malade imaginaire*, 14, 32, 97, 127–28; as critic and polemicist, 73, 159; and French classicism, 197; royal panegyrics of, 96–98; on sociability and gallantry, 125–28
- monarchy: Ancient party attitudes toward, 94, 140–44, 153–54; ancient republics contrasted with, 57–58, 89–90, 140–41, 143–44, 225–26; English liberty contrasted with, 215; Modern party attitude toward, 7, 89–98; and propaganda and panegyrics, 73–74, 93–98, 140–41; and sociability, 119–20, 122–23. *See also* Louis XIV
- Montaigne, Michel de: on allegory, 181; Amerindians compared to ancients by, 37–38; as defender of ancients, 24–25, 233n16; skepticism and relativism of, 133
- Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, 12; on cultural and historical difference, 33, 136, 140; and empiricism, 219, 233n23; on Homer, 249n21; political thought of, 143; quarrel, characterization of, 13, 70–71, 73, 219
- Montezuma, 38, 108, 234n1. *See also* Amerindians
- moral philosophy: and *moraliste* writing, 133–35; progress of, 84–85, 113–18, 123–24
- Moriarty, Michael, 237n12
- Morrissey, Robert, 240n2
- Möser, Justus, 230n32
- Moses, 68–69, 146. *See also* Homer: Hebrew prophets, compared to
- Müller, Max, 110
- Murrin, Michael, 252n30
- mythology. *See* allegory; paganism
- Nero, 143
- Netz, Robert, 238n17
- Newton, Isaac, 11, 40, 156, 215
- Niderst, Alain, 233n22, 237n8, 238n16, 239n7, 243n22
- nostalgia (for ancients), 67, 172–73, 199
- novel and romance: gallantry of critiqued, 48, 137–40; modernity of praised, 55–57, 60
- opera: Ancient partisans' critique of, 247n6; modernity of, 56, 174, 178–79; the quarrel and, 57, 71, 114, 177, 195
- Orientalism, 32, 61, 135–36, 168, 230n35
- Ovid, 137
- paganism: and comparative study of mythology, 109–11, 225; immorality of, 99–106, 225–26; irrationality of, 1, 7, 22, 99–100, 106–12, 222; and Judeo-Christian beliefs, 2, 7, 67–69, 99–106, 133, 144–48, 209, 221, 255n20; poetic nature of, 146–49, 209–12, 221–22, 255n20; political uses of its mythology, 95–98
- Pagden, Anthony, 232n7
- painting. *See* aesthetics; visual arts
- Pascal, Blaise: aesthetics of, 158–59; on *amour-propre*, 133–35; authority of ancients contested by, 52, 65; as dialectic thinker, 15, 237n3; as polemicist, 237n10
- Patey, Douglas Lane, 227n5, 229n26, 237n11
- pathos, tragic: Ancient partisans' conception of, 205, 208, 212; Modern partisans' critique of, 176–77, 226. *See also* didacticism and exemplarity of literature; realism of ancient literature; tragedy, as genre
- Pavel, Thomas, 231n39
- Pericles, 21
- Perrault, Charles: aesthetics of, 159–64, 182–83, 191; Boileau's critique of, 61–62, 190–91, 194–95, 199–200; on Euripides and opera in polemics with Racine (“querelle d’*Alceste*”), 71, 73, 88, 114, 127–28, 177, 186, 251n21; fairy tales, authorship of, 57, 107, 111, 129, 172; feminism of, 125, 127–30; as Modern partisan, 12, 13, 26, 27, 69–70, 71, 118, 153,

- Perrault, Charles (*continued*)
 216, 244n9; on morality of literature, 174–78, 182–83, 225, 226; mystification of antiquity critiqued, 17–18, 64, 80–81, 87, 166–71; political attitude and activity of, 58, 82, 88, 89–98, 247n12; on progress, 22–23, 31–32, 40, 42, 53, 56–59, 60, 65–66, 82–88, 232nn17–18, 234n26, 234n28, 234n1, 235n10; on puerility of ancients, 65–66, 171–73; rationalism of, 4, 6, 78–83, 85, 154, 226; and religion, 57, 67–69, 99–100, 106–7, 117; shocked by antiquity, 15, 39, 74, 78–88, 110, 113–14, 116; on sociability and gallantry, 118–30; on visual arts, 160–61, 169–70, 235n10, 241n15
- Perrault, Pierre, 245n14
- Petrarch, 35, 40
- philology, historical and scientific, 36–37, 68–69, 181. *See also* Renaissance: and humanism
- philosophy, concept of, 154–55. *See also* aesthetics; Cartesianism; geometric method; rationalism
- Phoenicians, 111
- Pindar, 68, 194, 197, 222
- Plato, 28, 146, 233n18; Homer, critique of, 19, 23, 88, 118–19, 157, 181, 206, 226; paganism, critique of, 101–2, 148, 226. *See also* Platonism (neo-)
- Platonism (neo-), 5, 158–59, 180, 187, 198
- Plautus, 60, 245n14
- pluralism, cultural and historical: of Ancient party, 7, 28, 62, 78, 103, 106, 132–36, 149, 203–4, 209–12; Modern partisans, rejected by, 84–86, 88, 99–100; temporal and geographical compared, 37–39
- Plutarch, 61, 143
- Pocock, J. G. A., 230n36
- Pompeii, 28
- Pope, Alexander: on Homer, 62, 185, 215–18, 224, 238n18; quarrel, role in the, 8, 12, 13;
- Popkin, Richard H., 233n23, 257n36
- Porphyry, 180
- Potts, Alex, 230n32
- Poulain de la Barre, François, 128
- Pradon, Jacques (Nicolas), 258n45
- presentism, 13; critiqued as cultural narcissism, 78, 80–81, 132–36, 203–4; of French classical age, 29; and Modern partisans, 7, 78–86, 95–98, 168–71. *See also* historical sensibility; pluralism, cultural and historical
- primitivism, 136–37, 139, 219–25. *See also* antiquity; Enlightenment, the; Homer
- Proclus, 180
- progress: in antiquity, 21–28; in arts vs. in sciences, 7, 26, 51–54, 154, 201; cumulative vs. revolutionary, 40–45; human development as metaphor for, 64–67; of literary genres, 55–62; moral, 83–85; in quarrel as central issue, 6–7, 11–12, 13. *See also* historical sensibility; modern, the
- propaganda. *See* monarchy
- Pythagoras, 157, 180
- quarrel of the ancients and moderns: ambiguities of two parties, 14–17, 21, 23, 45–49, 242n8; freedom of debate in, 63–74; history of, 6–8, 12–17, 63–64, 72–73; “hot” and “cool” approaches in, 77, 79–83, 136–37; literary and aesthetic nature of, 21, 131–32, 149; secularity of, 67–69. *See also* antiquity; modern, the
- Quinault, Philippe, 114, 138–39, 177, 251n21
- Rabau, Sophie, 229n16, 250n8
- Rabelais, François, 129, 181
- Racault, J. M., 232n13
- Racine, Jean: adaptor of Euripides (and “querelle d’*Alceste*”), 71, 73, 88, 114, 127, 186; as Ancient partisan, 12, 72, 135, 198, 212, 227n2, 244n9; and gallantry, 120, 137–38, 245n14; as historicist or universalist, 29–31; modern, viewed as, 242n8; pragmatism of, 159, 197; and realism, 131, 137–38, 207; Rousseau’s critique of, 226; the sublime and, 8, 223; and tragic pathos, 137–38
- Rapin, René, 174, 197, 258n50
- rationalism: applicability to literature, 1, 3; empirical aesthetics, opposed to, 5–6, 43, 54, 56, 159, 215–20, 222–23; histori-

- cal evolution and, 42–47; and religion, 99, 106–12. *See also* Cartesianism; geometric method
- realism of ancient literature: critiqued by Modern partisans, 85–88, 175–79; justified, 131–32, 149, 206–12. *See also* decorum; didacticism and exemplarity of literature; pathos, tragic
- Redford, Bruce, 250n13
- relativism. *See* pluralism, cultural and historical
- Renaissance: civilization of manners and, 119; discoveries of, 37–40; and humanism, 4, 5, 35–40, 44–45, 52, 77, 99, 146, 180–81, 186; as pre-modern, 25, 47, 198, 237n12; quarrel, forerunner to, 13, 96. *See also* Platonism (neo-)
- republicanism. *See* monarchy
- Revolution, French, 58, 89
- rhetoric. *See* eloquence
- Richardson, Robert D., 243n19
- Richelieu, Armand Jean du Plessis (Cardinal Duc de), 72, 93–94, 100
- Rigaud, Hyacinthe, 211
- Rigault, Hippolyte, 227n5, 241n1, 242n9
- Robespierre, Maximilien, 58
- Romanticism, 8, 28, 173, 198, 231n1
- Rome: Greek past, distinguished from, 60–61; modernity of its imperial age, 21–25; Rousseau on, 89, 225. *See also* antiquity; Augustus; Latin (language); Virgil
- Ronsard, Pierre de, 47
- Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste, 157, 233n24
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: on ancient literature, 8, 223–26; on ancient republics, 58, 89, 126, 225–26; on childhood, 172; and primitivism, 139, 224; quarrel, relation to, 12, 224, 225–26
- Rule, John C., 240n5
- Saint-Evremond, Charles de Marguetel de Saint-Denis (sieur de), 32, 135, 245n14, 246n2
- Saint Girons, Baldine, 256n28
- Saint-Just, Louis-Antoine-Léon de, 58
- Saint-Simon, Louis de Rouvroy (duc de), 143, 237n10
- Scaliger, Julius Caesar, 4, 36, 244n8
- Schiffman, Zachary S., 232n3
- Scholar, Richard, 254n11
- sciences, natural: compared to moral philosophy, 123–24; distinguished from arts, 51–54, 201, 255n20; and scientific “revolution,” 11, 13, 26, 40, 59. *See* progress; rationalism
- Scodel, Joshua, 250n11
- Scudéry, Madeleine de, 138, 195
- sculpture. *See* aesthetics; visual arts
- Seneca, 60
- senses and the sensorial: defense of by Ancient partisans, 188, 190, 196–204, 216–19, 224; subordinate to reason in Moderns’ aesthetics, 159–62, 169–70. *See also* aesthetics; empiricism; sublime, the
- Sermain, Jean-Paul, 243n16
- Settis, Salvatore, 229n27
- Seznec, Jean, 239n4
- Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 230n32
- Shakespeare, William, 213–14
- Shank, J. B., 233n23
- Shankman, Steven, 259n3
- Simonsuuri, Kirsti, 232n13
- Snow, C. P., 234n2
- sociability: and class hierarchies, 119–20, 123; of modern France, 7, 84, 113, 117, 119–30; versus pedantism, 71–73. *See also* gallantry
- Socrates: as “modern,” 24–25, 26, 65; as philosopher, 148, 259n56
- Sophocles: as classical model, 4, 28, 58, 68, 69; indecency of, 84; tragic pathos of, 3
- Soriano, Marc, 241n1, 242n13, 246n22
- Sparta, 92–93, 225, 226
- Spinoza, Baruch, 36, 68–69, 71, 181
- Stegmann, André, 241n1
- Stendhal (Marie-Henri Beyle), 258n44
- Stenzel, Hartmut, 238n15
- Stuurman, Siep, 246n19
- sublime, the: Addison’s conception of, 216–17; Ancient partisans’ conception of, 185–204, 212; delimitation of, 221; obscurity of critiqued by Moderns, 87, 194–95; Pope (Alexander) and, 215–18;

- sublime, the (*continued*)
 quarrel, role in, 4–6, 26, 43, 102. *See also* aesthetics; autonomy of literature and the arts; empiricism; Longinus (pseudo-)
- Swift, Jonathan: as Ancient partisan, 12, 228n7, 232n5, 237n11; and *The Battle of the Books*, 13
- Tacitus, 61, 137, 144
- taste. *See* senses and the sensorial
- Temple, William, 229n26
- Terence, 27, 60, 195, 245n14
- Terrasson, Jean (abbé): on arts vs. science, 53–54; on Boileau, 247n7; on didacticism, 178–79, 208, 225; geometric approach to literature, 156–57; historical relativism, critique of, 247n10; on Homer, 79, 116–17, 149, 179, 183, 224, 228n10, 244n6; on immorality of ancients, 114, 117, 225, 239n7; political attitude of, 248n12; on progress, 79, 84, 228n12
- Theocritus: Ancient partisans' admiration for, 73, 87, 191, 192; Modern partisans' critique of, 55, 85–87, 90, 122, 175
- Thirouin, Laurent, 239n11
- Thomassin, (père) Louis, 248n16
- Todorov, Tzvetan, 230n31, 232n8
- tragedy, as genre, 60, 178. *See also* pathos, tragic
- translation: Ancient party views on, 1–2, 71–72, 190–92, 200, 214; Modern party views on, 170–71
- Troy, François de, 211
- Van Doren, Charles, 237n3
- Van Elslande, Jean-Pierre, 241n19
- Vasoli, C., 232n3
- Versailles: decoration of, 95, 143, 170; as epitome of the modern, 7, 12, 70, 74, 123, 125, 139; fêtes, 94, 96–97, 127; gardens of, 32, 70, 123, 216; political perspective on, 143–44
- Viala, Alain, 238n17, 245n10, 245n14, 245n18
- Violet, Michèle, 250n8
- Vico, Giambattista, 12, 30–31, 33, 36, 219–20, 222, 223, 230n35–36
- Vincent, Monique, 247n6
- Virgil: as ancient model, 52, 58, 153, 190, 195, 205; immorality and crudeness of, 78; modernity of in relation to Homer, 22, 25, 26–27, 54–57, 116–17, 179, 192, 214, 215–17
- visual arts: compared to literary arts, 196, 199, 208, 210–11, 249n4; historicizing views on, 60, 61, 235n10; materiality of critiqued, 160–61, 169–70; in royal image-making, 94–95, 143
- Voltaire, François-Marie Arouet de: and empiricism, 233n23, 215, 219; historicizing attitude of, 30, 33, 44, 232n12; literary criticism of, 158, 213–15, 218–19, 222, 226; political thought of, 143, 215; quarrel, relation to the, 8, 12, 58, 214–15, 218–19
- Walton, Guy, 241n15
- Wilde, Oscar, 177
- Winckelmann, Johann Joachim, 28, 230n32
- Woolf, Virginia, 72, 167–68, 170
- Yilmaz, Levent, 228n6, 232n1, 233n14, 236n3, 237n4
- Zeuxis, 161
- Zuber, Roger, 253n1